



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager

From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

Date: February 28, 2024

Re: Central Square City Lots Study and Recommendations for Early Action

Building off years of past work, planning, and community input in Central Square, the Community Development Department led a municipal property needs assessment and planning study for city-owned properties in Central Square. The study included ten sites, five parking lots and five parcels with existing buildings. The purpose of the study was to understand community needs, evaluate site constraints and opportunities, and recommend future uses. The final report of the study is attached.

Several goals emerged from the community process including the need for increased housing supply, including affordable housing, civic and cultural space, small business support, municipal office space, an improved library, and public parking. The plan recommends long-term uses for the ten sites, including recommendations for short-term uses and phasing. The final report is attached and provides a comprehensive summary of the community engagement process, site conditions and considerations, and future use recommendations. This memo highlights early action items recommended by the City to realize the community's vision.

Early Action Items

105 Windsor Street

105 Windsor Street has historically been used as a schoolhouse, veterans hall, and recreation center with gymnasium, library, and community meeting space. Currently vacant, the building is an opportunity to provide desired community uses for the Port neighborhood. The range of desired uses expressed during the public process include multi-purpose meeting spaces, museum spaces, classrooms/study spaces, and shared co-working spaces. The City is committed to starting a community process to determine the neighborhood's specific priorities and program uses that would inform the building's renovation. Funds for capital renovations have been appropriated.

84 Bishop Allen Drive and 96 Bishop Allen Drive

84 Bishop Drive is approximately 34,000 square foot lot currently used for public parking, Starlight Square, Popportunity, and the seasonal farmer's market. As one of the larger City-owned lots in the study area, 84 Bishop Allen Drive offers a unique opportunity to make permanent the current, temporary activation uses of Starlight Square and Popportunity through a mixed-use development that includes a significant amount of housing, public parking, and civic and cultural space that can support

performances, markets, and community gathering. Norfolk Street was identified for potential pedestrianization that could enhance access to and availability of civic uses.

96 Bishop Allen Drive is an approximately 6,000 square foot lot used as a public parking lot. The site sits on the northwest corner of the block and experiences significant shading, making it less suitable for a park or public space. The plan recommends this site be redeveloped for housing with the ground floor explored for active community use.

Given the clear community vision for both sites and their proximity to each other, the sites offer an opportunity for coordinated development to maximize community benefits. The City, working in collaboration with the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, recommends initiating an open process to seek proposals from interested parties to create a mixed-use development that will bring a mix of housing, with an emphasis on affordability, affordable ground floor commercial space, civic and cultural space, and public parking.

The City intends to start a procurement process this year to select interested partners capable of delivering development objectives identified by the community. A first step will be to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to potential development partners that will help the City develop and refine conceptual development and business models. Following the evaluation of RFI responses, the City will refine and solidify its development objectives for the sites and release a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit development partners to implement this vision. The City would follow requirements set under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30B and Chapter 2.110 of the Cambridge Municipal Ordinance that govern real property dispositions.

Throughout this process, the City will continue to engage with the community, including meeting with organizations such as the Central Square BID, the Central Square Advisory Committee, neighborhood groups, the faith community, senior housing, non-profits, and cultural organizations.

Central Square City Lots Study



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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February 2024

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CENTRAL SQUARE CITY LOTS STUDY

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Image credit: Kyle Klein

01

ACCOMPLISHING CITY & COMMUNITY GOALS WITH CITY-OWNED SITES

CONTEXT

Central Square is a lively, multi-use district that serves as the city's downtown, its arts and culture heart, and its civic government and social services destination. The area is a hub for multi-modal transportation, including a growing bike lane network, an MBTA T stop, and multiple bus lines. Central Square, and the study area for this project, touches many neighborhoods including Mid-Cambridge, the Port, Riverside, and Cambridgeport, and is within close walking distance to other commercial squares, institutions, and residential areas.

Central Square is well known and loved across the City, and region, for the cultural life and small businesses that give it a strong identity and draw more than 500,000 visitors annually. In 2012, Central Square was designated a cultural district by the Massachusetts Cultural Council,

in recognition of its dance, theater, music, visual arts, and multicultural food options. Central Square is also Cambridge's civic and community center, with City Hall, the Senior Center, the Central Square Library Branch, and many human and social services.

Recent discussions have also suggested the need to expand Central Square's social services by co-locating service providers or expanding to new programs. This study hopes to make the best use of city-owned sites to support and strengthen the ability of Central Square to deliver and expand on the many important services, connections, and experiences it offers today, while also expanding housing choices for the community.



Image credit: Kyle Klein / Getty

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Central Square City Lots study evaluates ten municipally-owned parking lots and buildings in Central Square for their potential to support the City in using its own assets to realize community goals and support City operations.

Support & Build on Past Discussions

This work builds on years of past work, planning, and community input in Central Square, which often specifically identified City-owned lots in Central Square as key opportunities to meet broader community needs.

“Municipal parking lots represent one of the greatest opportunities for realizing a vision for Central Square.”

- K2C2 Central Square report

“Promote redevelopment that is mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, and sustainable within surface parking lots.”

- Envision Cambridge

This process reconfirms needs heard through past processes, analysis and feedback and expands on it through additional analysis and feedback to identify future redevelopment and program use.

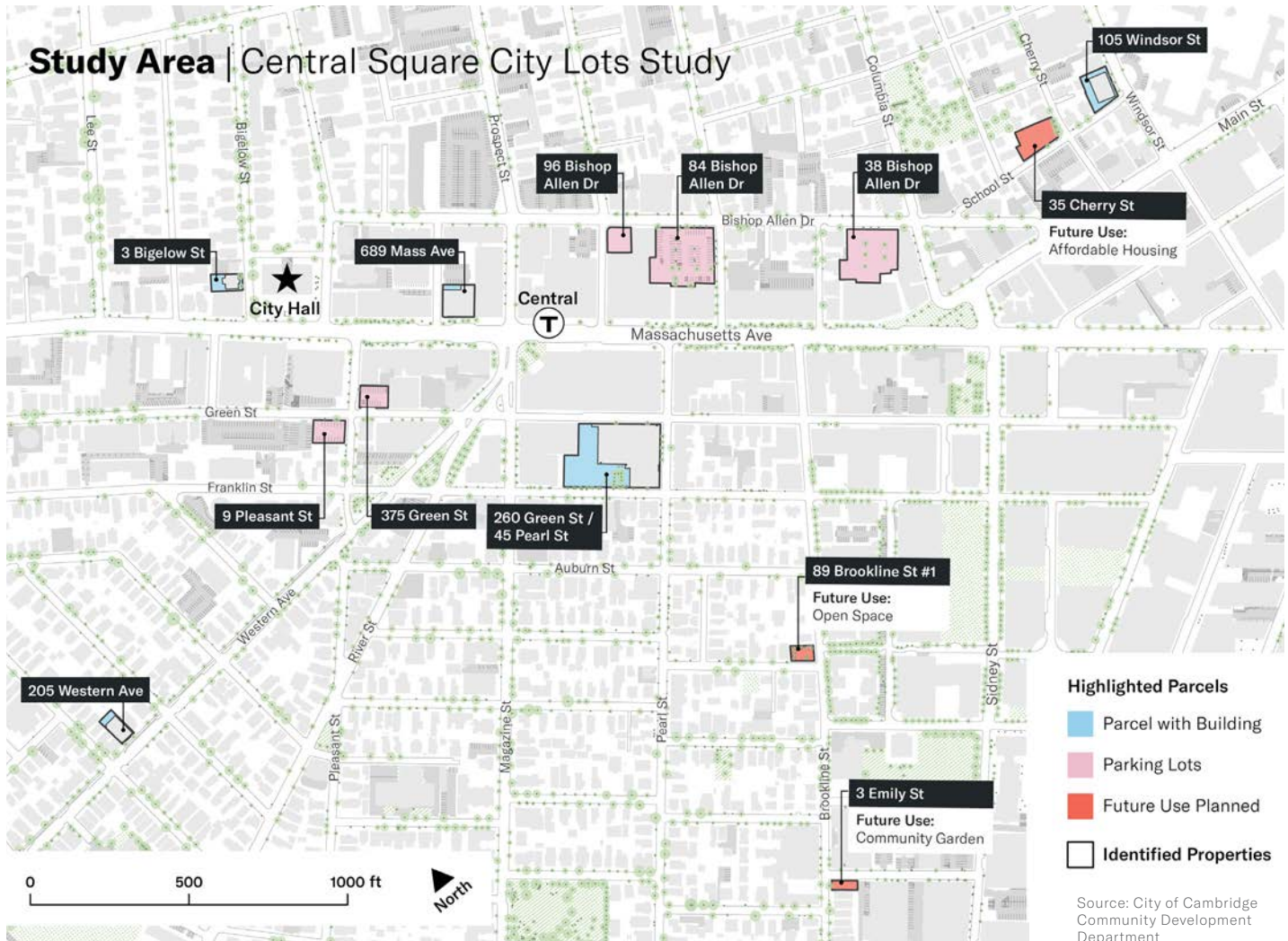
Test What’s Feasible

Technical site assessments, a district parking analysis, and test fits helped determine what is possible for the future re-use of each site. Different types of uses have specific space needs that make them more or less suitable for different building sizes or configurations. The test fits considered different variables, including building or lot size, existing structures and utilities, market feasibility (at a high level), and zoning considerations.

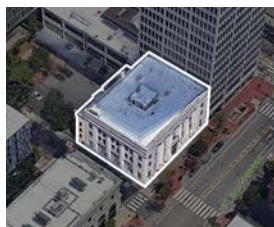
Recommend Possible Steps

As a result of community feedback and the test fit findings, this study recommends preferred options for each site as well as proposed short-term priority actions and phasing. Continued engagement and refinement of community needs will be important for future steps across any of these sites.

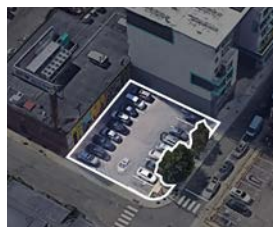
The ten project sites considered as part of this study are shown in the study area map. Three additional municipally-owned sites with known future uses were also considered as part of area’s future context: 35 Cherry Street; 89 Brookline Street; and 3 Emily Street.



3 Bigelow St



689 Mass Ave



96 Bishop Allen Dr



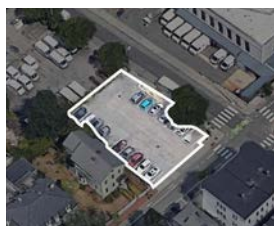
84 Bishop Allen Dr



38 Bishop Allen Dr



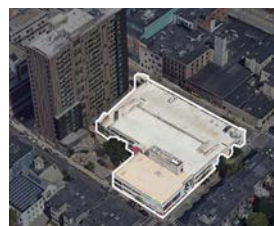
205 Western Ave



9 Pleasant St



375 Green St



260 Green St



105 Windsor St

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

This project looked to City staff and the Central Square community to inform and refine study goals, test fit directions, and final site recommendations.

Interdepartmental Working Group

An internal working group of interdepartmental City staff met monthly over the course of the seven-month project to share feedback and provide guidance on the planning process and recommendations.

Staff Interviews

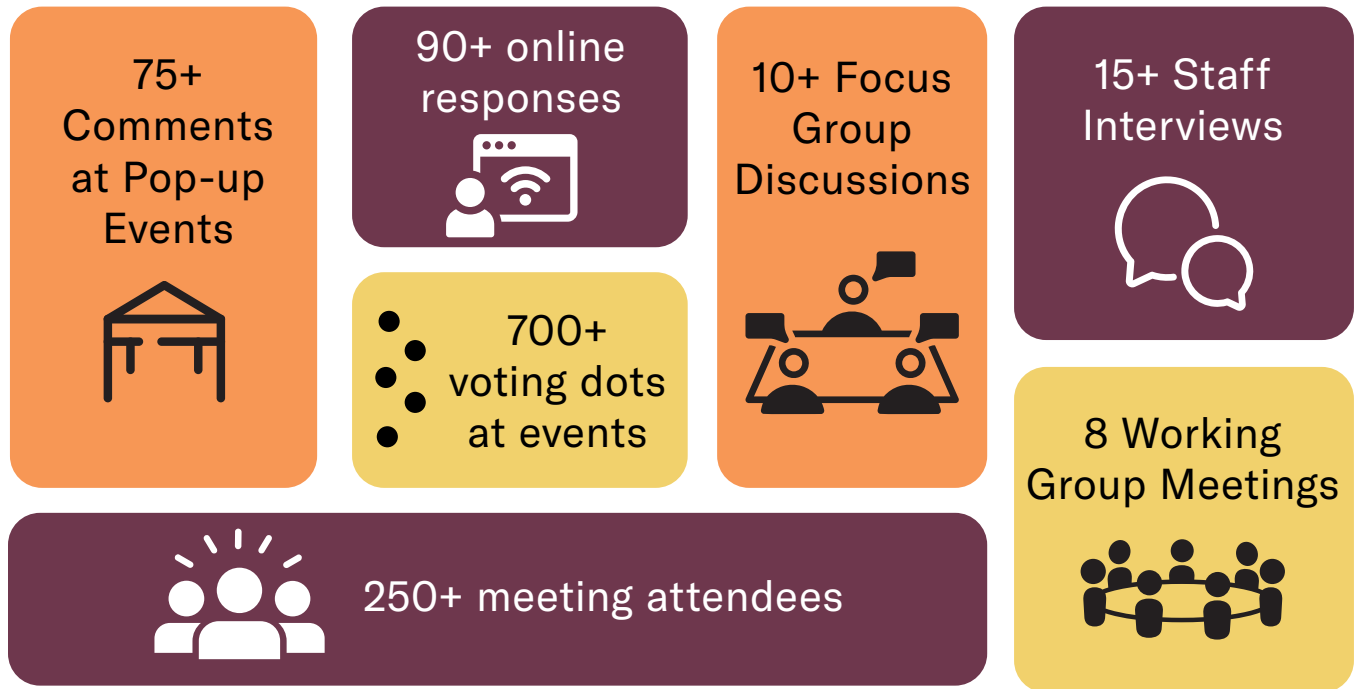
In addition to regular interdepartmental working group meetings, more than 15 interviews were done with staff representing particular City offices or perspectives. These interviews provided opportunities to review site conditions and identify opportunities and planning objectives.

Community Focus Groups

The project team led more than ten focus groups to learn about particular needs, challenges, and opportunities for these sites from myriad perspectives. Focus group conversations conducted as part of this process included meeting with:

- Community Engagement Team (CET)
- Small Businesses
- Arts & Cultural Organizations
- Seniors at the Citywide Senior Center
- Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association
- Margaret Fuller House
- Multi Service Center / C-CAN Client - Unhoused Community
- Moore Youth Center





Pop-Up Events

Team members set up tables at local events including the Central Square Farmers Market, a Central Square Library Branch evening children's storytelling event, and MathTalk Summer Family Day at Starlight Square.

Online Survey

An online version of the pop-up activities was shared on the project website for people to participate virtually.

Community Meetings & City Council Roundtable

Three community meetings and a City Council Roundtable provided opportunities to dig in more deeply with community members on needs, opportunities, and

vision.

- In-person Open House on October 8, 2023 at Starlight Square
- Online Community Meeting on October 25, 2023
- City Council Roundtable Presentation & Discussion on November 13, 2023
- Online Community Meeting on December 14, 2023

Online presentations were recorded and available for online viewing along with other project materials. A dedicated project website was kept up to date with project announcements, engagement opportunities, and project materials. Flyering, updates on social media, and advertising through City newsletters helped spread the word about the project and opportunities to engage.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Certain topics or themes came up particularly often during conversations with the community.

More frequent ideas ↑
↓ Less frequent ideas

Create more affordable housing

179

Expand parks, playgrounds, community gardens, plazas

119

Flexible arts/market space & performance spaces

94

Expand cultural amenities, spaces, museums

86

Improve the Library, community meeting spaces, learning spaces

86

Create a destination for supportive social services

76

Create small business incubators

66

Provide municipal offices & City meeting spaces

29

Parking

9



STUDY GOALS

Community discussions, focus groups, and interviews with City staff led to nine goals for the study.

Housing

- Create more housing in Central Square, particularly affordable housing

City & Community Resources

- Accommodate cultural programs, events, and spaces
- Create high quality community services in Central Square
- Provide opportunities for social services to expand and co-locate
- Address city office and collaboration space needs

Open Space, Parking, Infrastructure

- Increase parks and open spaces
- Support ongoing infrastructure improvement projects
- Meet parking needs & include transportation demand management

Other

- Plan for future opportunities to connect adjacent private lots



Central Square needs ...

**Have a location in mind?
Add a note to the map to show us where!**

02











RECOMMENDATIONS

ACHIEVING GOALS ACROSS 10 CITY SITES

The goals informed how to use the City's property to make progress in three major areas: 1) expanding community and city services; 2) increasing housing and amenities that contribute to civic life; and 3) maintaining flexibility for the future to continue to meet infrastructure, open space, and parking needs across Central Square.

For the purposes of this report, recommendations for each site are discussed by grouping sites into these three categories by their predominant recommended use. This does not mean that a site only achieves the goals in one category – many of these sites include proposals for mixed use development, open space, and utilities solutions that address multiple goals. Icons throughout the report illustrate where this overlap occurs.

ICON KEY

	Community Space		Housing
	Library		Supportive Housing
	Arts & Cultural / Performance Space		Park / Open Space
	Retail space		Parking
	Office Space		Stormwater Infrastructure

EXPAND COMMUNITY & CITY SERVICES IN CENTRAL SQUARE

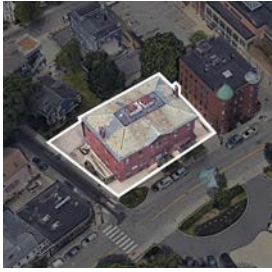


INCREASE HOUSING & CIVIC LIFE IN CENTRAL SQUARE



MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY, MEET INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS, AND INCREASE OPEN SPACE IN CENTRAL SQUARE





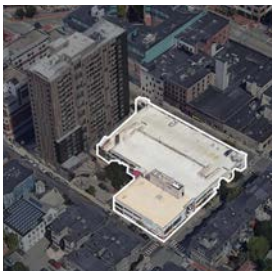
105 WINDSOR ST



689 MASS AVE



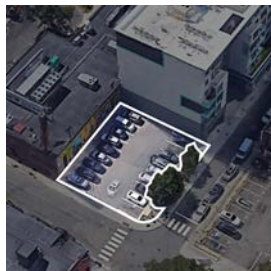
3 BIGELOW ST



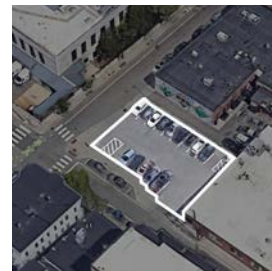
260 GREEN ST



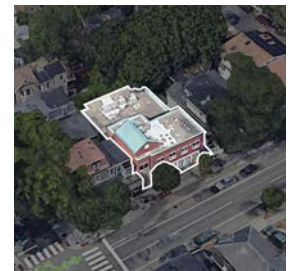
84 BISHOP
ALLEN DR



96 BISHOP
ALLEN DR



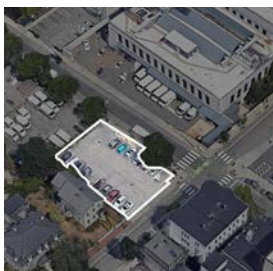
375 GREEN ST



205 WESTERN
AVE



38 BISHOP
ALLEN DR



9 PLEASANT ST



TEST FIT ASSUMPTIONS

Test fits are a simple method to estimate a possible building's size, height, square footage, or unit count for residential or other uses. They are not design recommendations and the height, form, and character of each project will change in the future as a result of community feedback, market viability, construction technologies, and financial considerations.

Each test-fit aims to:

Match sites to their best uses

- Different types of uses have specific space needs that make them more or less suitable for different building sizes or configurations.

Test the maximum density allowable by zoning

- Zoning informs height, density, setbacks, open space requirements, and possible uses (among other things!)
- The Affordable Housing Overlay (AHO) Amendment allows eligible buildings in Central Square to exceed zoning heights, up to 15 stories or 170' as a baseline.
- The AHO also provides more flexibility on some setbacks and open space requirements.

Adjust for what's most feasible today

- For small sites, six stories is most likely due to high construction costs, small parcel size, building technology, and building code restrictions.
- Projects show a range of units to reflect a variety of options around unit sizes, common spaces, or other variables that influence a building's efficiency.

Consider where future steps might adjust massing

- Design guidelines, program refinements, construction considerations, and relationships with other buildings will likely result in changes to the building design in future steps.



Sample test fit image

Central Square Needs...

sample community quotes

**“Bigger
and updated
library with large spaces
for events and more public
computers.”**

**“Services
for youth struggling
with mental health,
especially in relation to
foster care system.”**

**“Resources
to support the
unhoused community.”**

**“Kitchen
space, party rental space,
neighborhood meeting spaces,
community arts studio.”**

EXPANDING COMMUNITY & CITY SERVICES IN CENTRAL SQUARE

105 Windsor St

as a neighborhood center for the Port

689 Massachusetts Ave

as a new branch library

3 Bigelow Street

as expanded space for city offices



105 WINDSOR STREET

Existing Conditions

105 Windsor Street is a vacant building located across from Newtowne Court Public Housing and neighboring various nonprofit and health service providers. DPW, in partnership with the Cambridge Housing Authority, plans to house above-ground electrical infrastructure for Newtowne Court at the back of this location, making the rest of the site available for additional use.

10,018

Site Area (sq ft)

2

Number of Stories

C-1

Zoning District

0

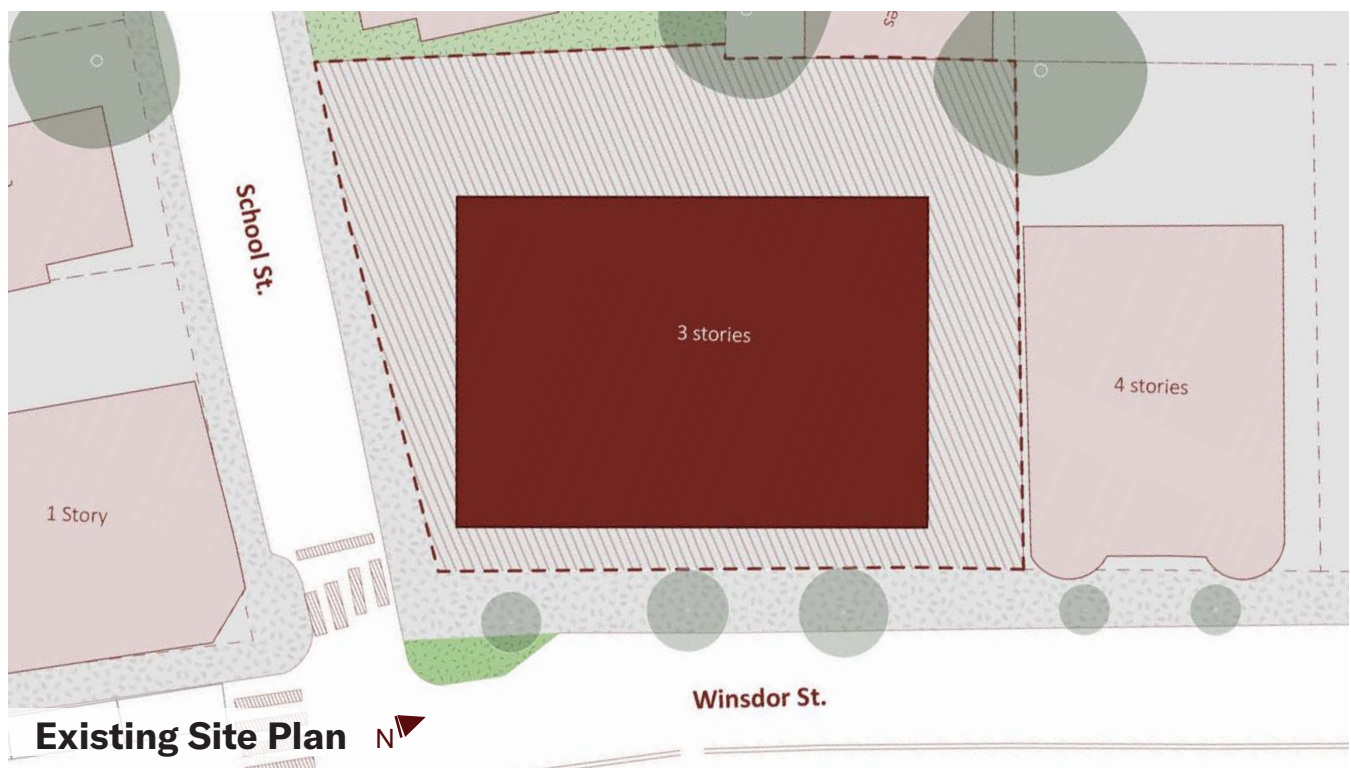
Parking Spaces

13,104

Gross Building Area
(sq ft)

0.4m/8min walk

Distance to nearest
T-Station



Site Considerations

- Proximity to Newtowne Court and various nonprofit and health providers.
- Originally built as the Alphabet School. Later uses included recreation facilities, the Cambridge Health Alliance and the Windsor House, a senior daycare facility.
- Rear of the site required for above-ground utilities.
- Given the significance of the building, it would be eligible for historic tax credits and historic preservation funding.
- The existing building is a two-story plus basement wood and steel framed building with steel columns and unreinforced masonry bearing walls.



105 WINDSOR STREET

RECOMMENDATION



At 105 Windsor Street, there is an opportunity to provide community space for the Port neighborhood, which might include uses such as multi-purpose meeting spaces, museum spaces, classrooms/study spaces, and small offices. This project can move forward with next steps to include a community process to determine the neighborhood's specific priorities and desires for community uses.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



Learning Spaces



Museum



Performance & Artist Spaces



Community Services / Health Center

"More dedicated space for homework / school work for youth"

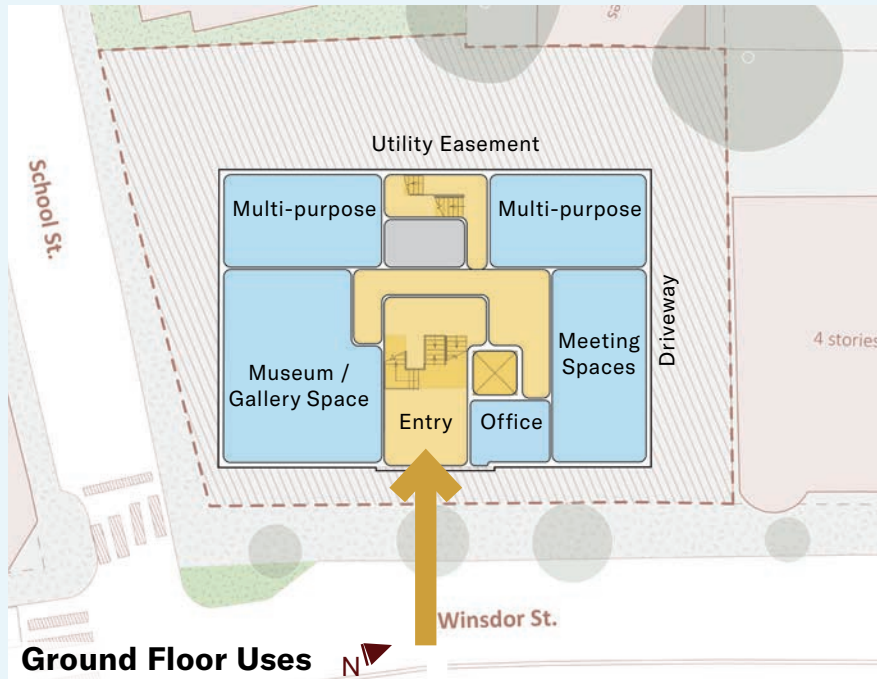
"I would like the space to be focused on Port residents"

"This could be a museum, but priority for an active community space"

sample community feedback

Test Fit Highlights

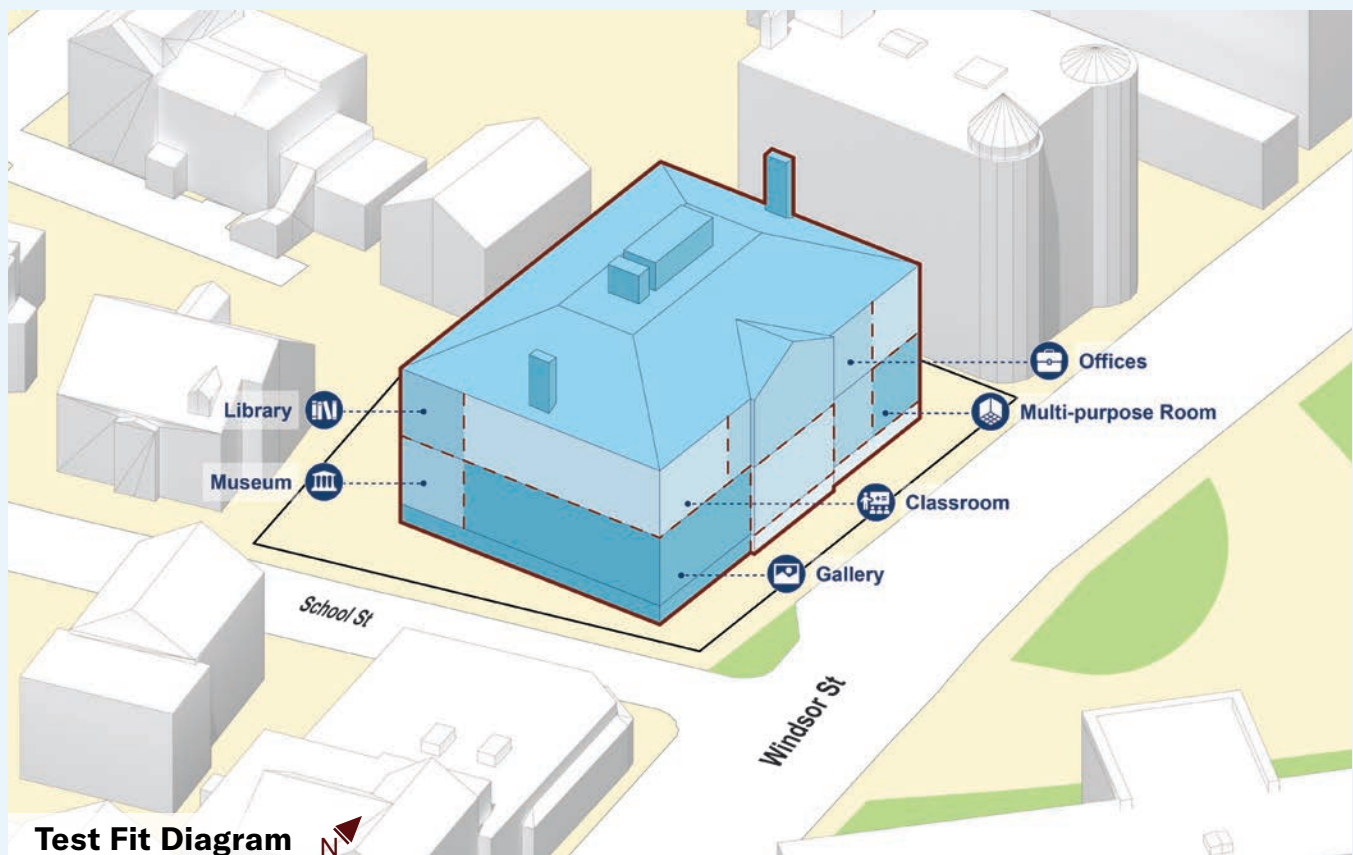
Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



- Community spaces for the Port neighborhood (e.g. multi-purpose meeting spaces, museum/library space, classrooms/study spaces, small offices)
- Total Building Area (NSF) 11,590 SF including two stories above grade



11,590 SF
community spaces

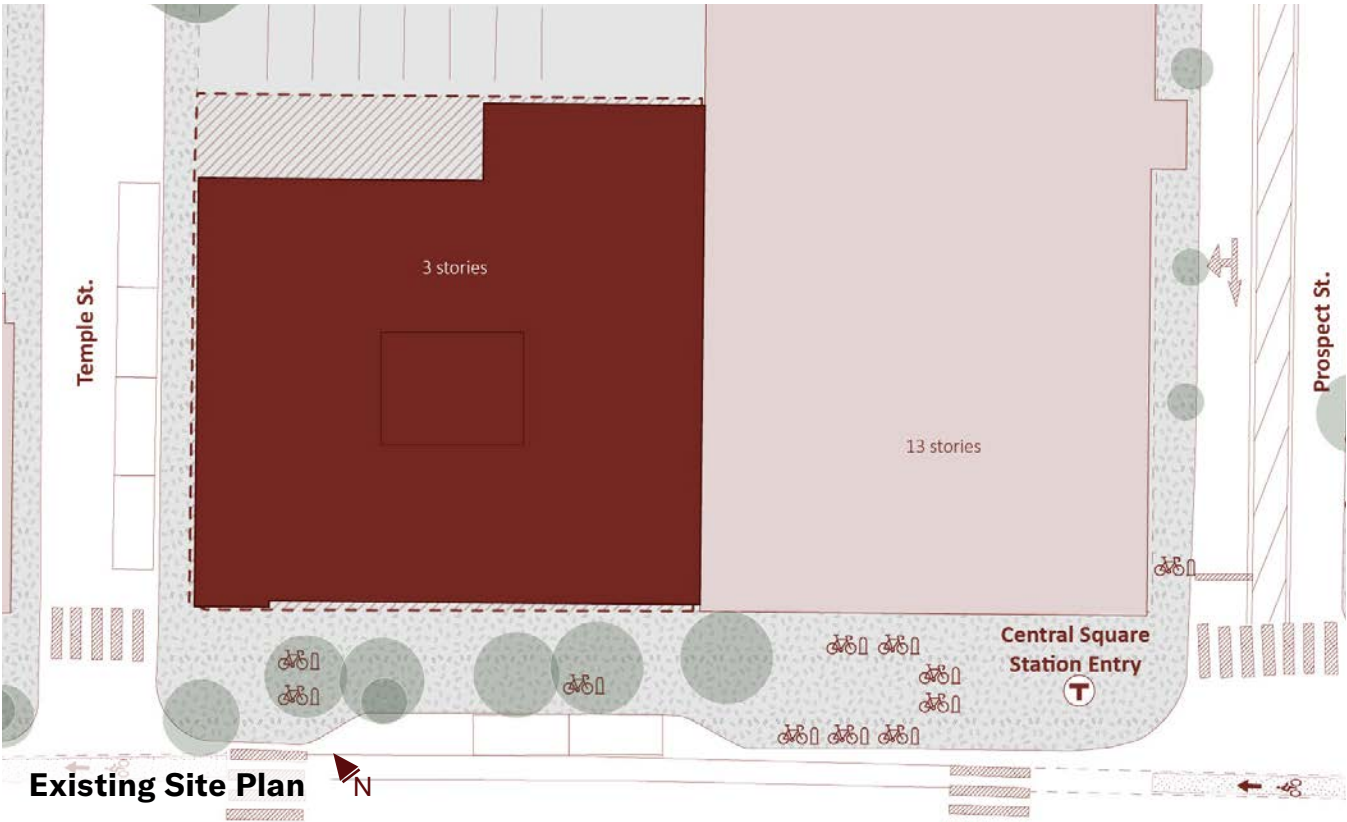


689 MASSACHUSETTS AVE

Existing Conditions

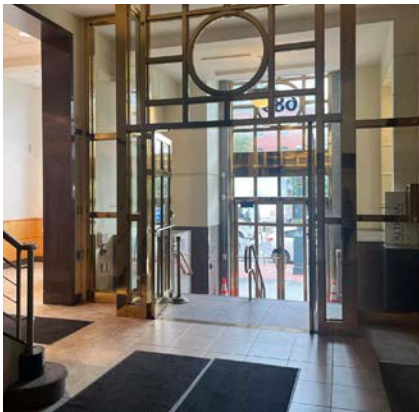
A recent acquisition for the City, this building faces Massachusetts Ave and the Central Square T-station. The building temporarily serves as municipal offices for the Departments of Human Resources and Community Safety. An ongoing architectural building assessment suggests full renovations are needed, including a new roof and mechanical system to meet City regulations.

10,101	3
Site Area (sq ft)	Number of Stories
BB-CSQ	0
Zoning District	Parking Spaces
33,456	75ft/1min walk
Gross Building Area (sq ft)	Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- The City recently acquired this building with approval to use it for municipal uses.
- The building has historic value and limited expansion potential.
- Near-term leases are in place.
- The existing monumental structure dates from 1904 and was designed by well-known architects William E. Chamberlain and Clarence H. Blackall in the high Beaux Arts style to house the Cambridgeport Savings Bank's expanding operations.



689 MASSACHUSETTS AVE

RECOMMENDATION



689 Massachusetts Ave was identified as a feasible and strong candidate to relocate the Central Square Library Branch to allow for a larger, centrally located, improved, and more accessible public library branch. This will allow for an expanded and flexible library space with contemplative and community gathering spots as well as ample study and learning spaces for adults, teens, and children. As programming is finalized, there is a possibility for the library use to occupy most of the building space with municipal office space reserved for the upper floor, at least in the short and medium term until a larger, centralized office solution is found. Relocating the library also creates greater opportunities for redevelopment of 260 Green Street/45 Pearl Street for needed housing production.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



Cultural Amenities / Spaces



Library Relocation



Affordable Housing



Municipal Offices

“Moving the library to 689 would make it easier to access for kids and families.”

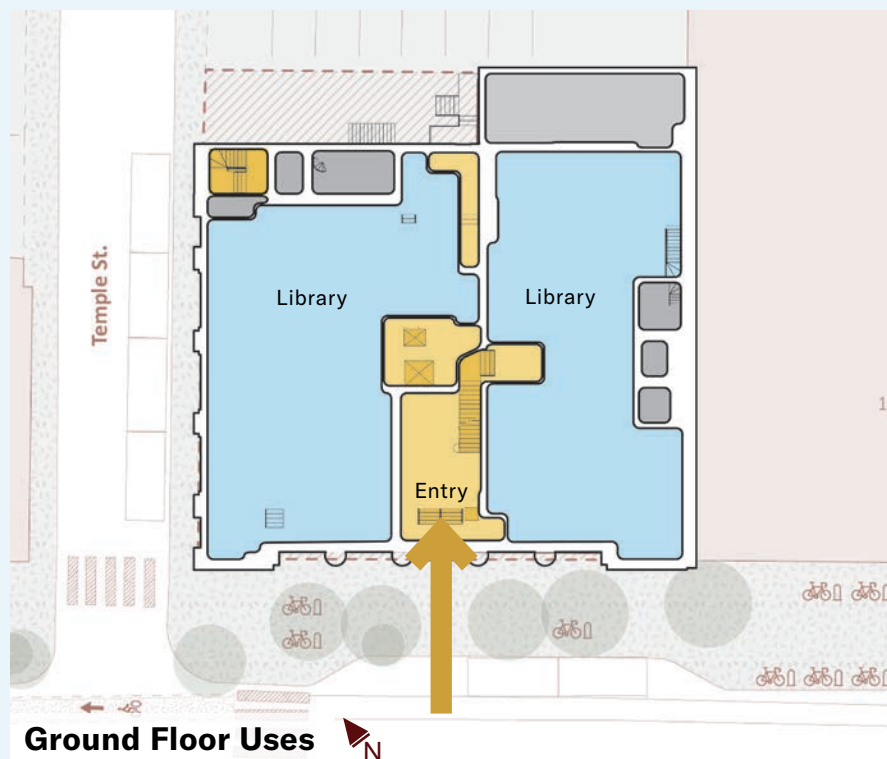
“Love the library idea, combine with a museum?”

“Signature location, an opportunity for vibrant community center”

sample community feedback

Test Fit Highlights

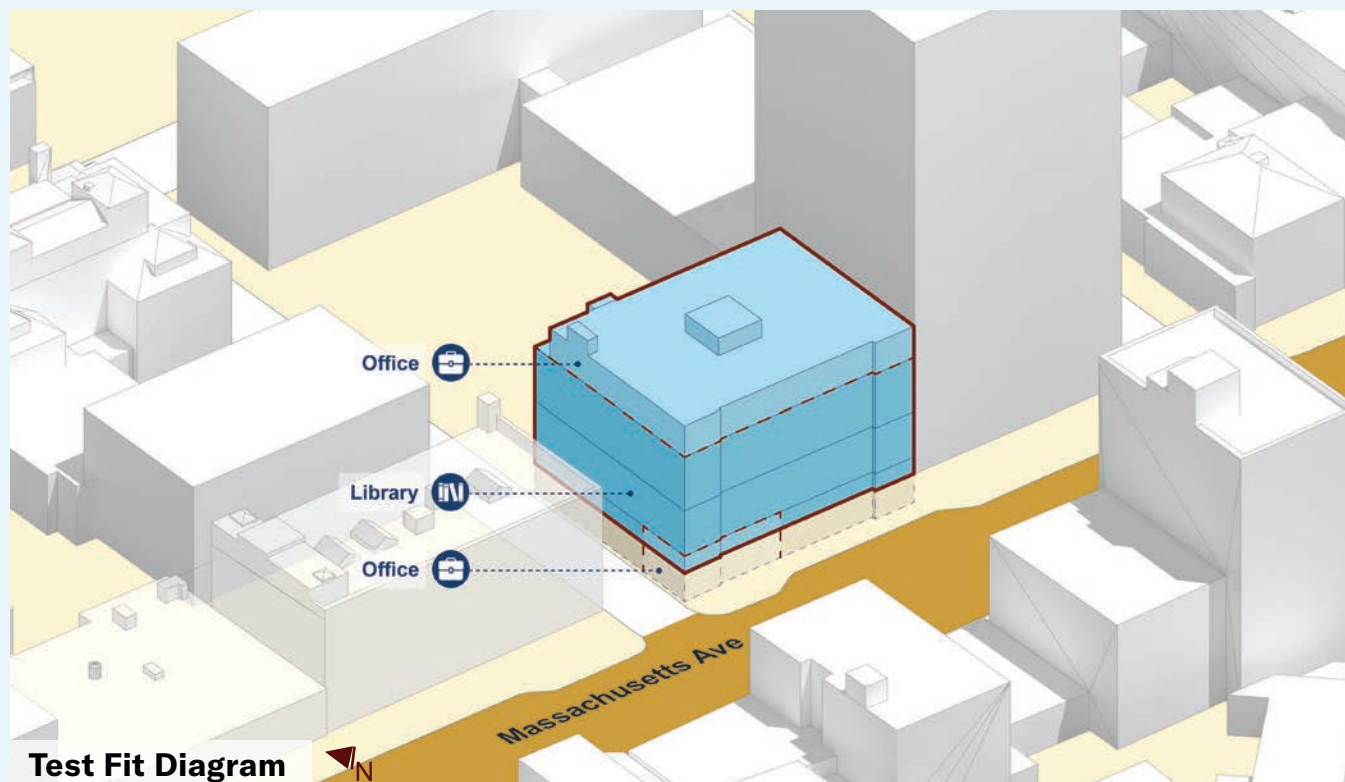
Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



- Three stories above grade
- Current 260 Green Library NSF - 13,699 SF
- Total library area (NSF) (Level 01 & 02) - 15,315 SF
- Additional space is also suitable for offices
- Total Building Area (NSF) - 28,757 SF

15,315 SF
Library

6,248 SF
Offices



3 BIGELOW STREET

Existing Conditions

Built in 1869, this three-story building sits northeast of the City of Cambridge’s City Hall and adjacent to City-leased (5 Bigelow) and City-owned (Lombardi) buildings. The Department of Human Services previously used the building as transitional housing, but it currently sits vacant, needing significant structural renovations.

5,175
Site Area (sq ft)

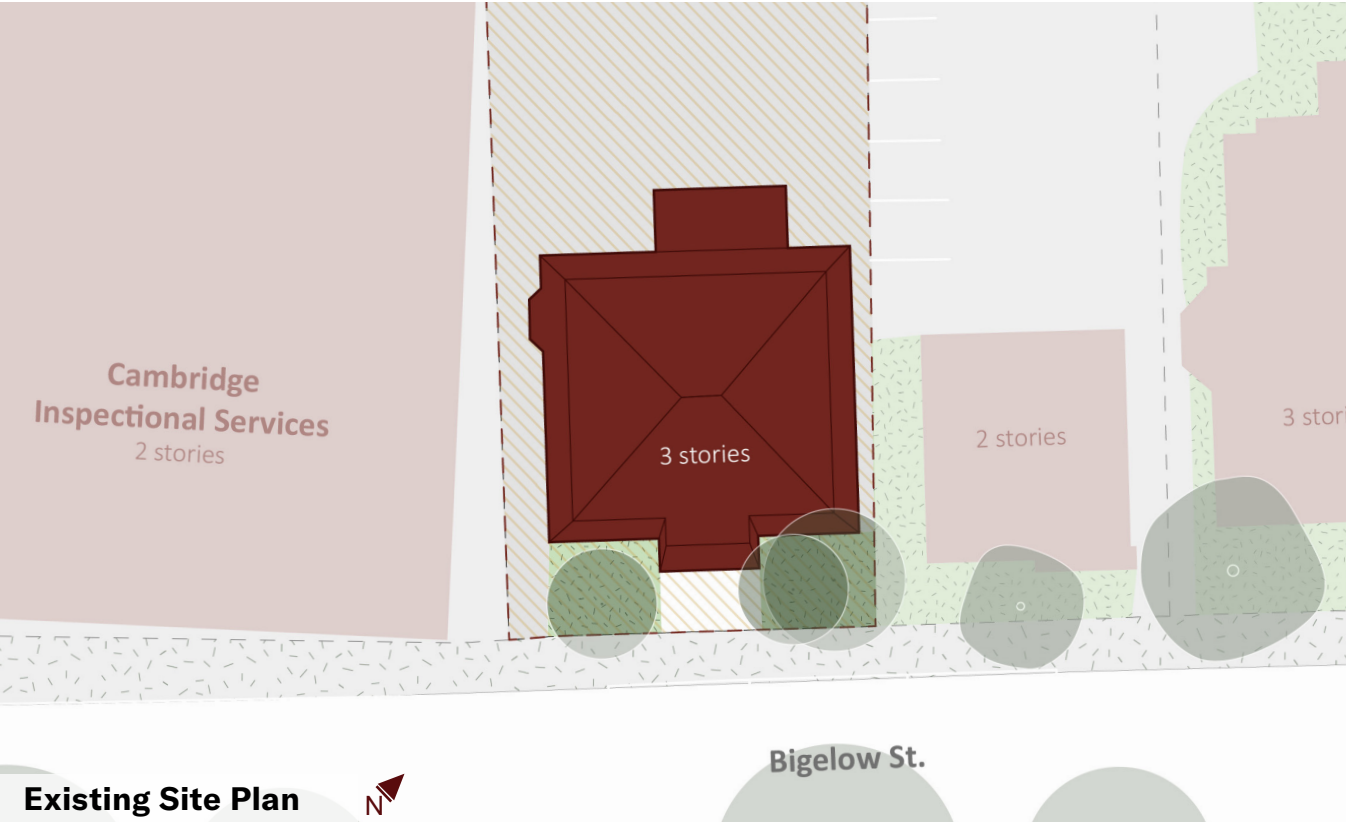
3
Number of Stories

C-2B
Zoning District

5
Parking Spaces

6,386
Gross Building Area (sq ft)

0.2mi/4 min walk
Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- The existing structure is a three-story wood framed house with a basement, built in the Second Empire Style.
- The building is vacant, requires extensive renovations, and has historic character.
- Most recently used by the Department of Human Services as transitional housing.
- Adjacent to Cambridge City Hall and the Lombardi municipal office building.
- The 3 Bigelow St entrance faces Bigelow St, with a curb cut on the south side of the parcel that allows for vehicle entry to its small parking lot in the rear.
- A 2014 Conditions Assessment report found the building to be in poor condition and in need of significant renovations.



3 BIGELOW STREET

RECOMMENDATION



Given the site's proximity to City Hall and the Lombardi building, the preferred option is to renovate or redevelop 3 Bigelow Street for City offices. This future renovation project can replace the addition at the back of the building with a more efficient, larger, and accessible addition. The ultimate project can also evaluate future opportunities to include adjacent sites, such as the Lombardi building. The City's Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO) goals would be easier to achieve if 3 Bigelow and Lombardi were developed together as a larger project.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



Community Services



Affordable Housing



Cultural Amenities / Spaces



Community Meeting Spaces

sample community feedback

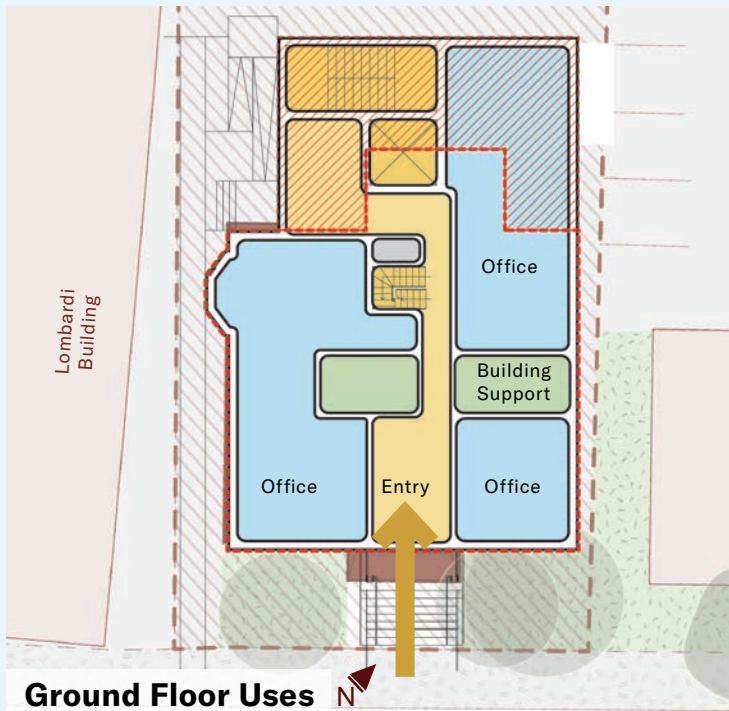
"Close to City Hall office space for City Staff!"

"Can it be attached to Lombardi Building?"

"Can community meeting space be combined with city meeting spaces?"

Test Fit Highlights

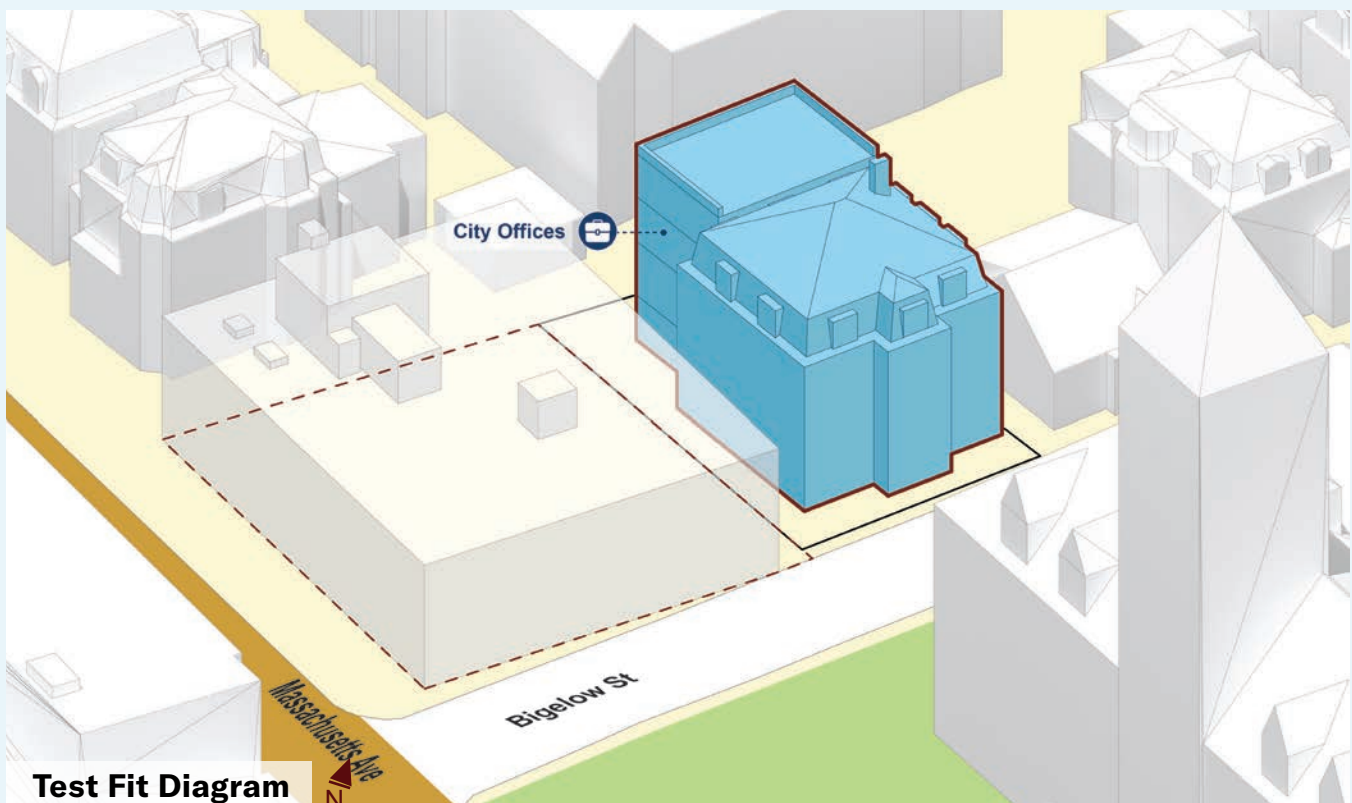
Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



- Original building renovated for municipal offices
- Demolition of existing non-historic rear addition and new addition created to add space and make building accessible
- Total Addition Area (GSF) - 3,036 SF
- Additional development may be possible if building is demolished and rebuilt in tandem with Lombardi building



8,475 SF
Offices



Central Square Needs...

sample community quotes

“Housing,
community
space, safe space, and
programming for people
experiencing houselessness,
childcare ”

“Affordable
housing and community
space!!!”

“We need
more housing! At all income
levels. More residents
would help support local
businesses, and activity
around the clock would help
people feel safe.”

“Housing
with ground floor
community-oriented spaces:
cultural amenities, spaces for young
residents, local commercial (restaurants,
cafes, small-scale retail). But most
importantly, multi-family housing in a range
of configurations with a significant
affordable component.”

INCREASING HOUSING & CIVIC LIFE IN CENTRAL SQUARE

260 Green St / 45 Pearl St

as mixed use housing

84 Bishop Allen Dr (Lot 5)

as mixed use housing including cultural performance space, retail, and outdoor space

96 Bishop Allen Dr (Lot 4)

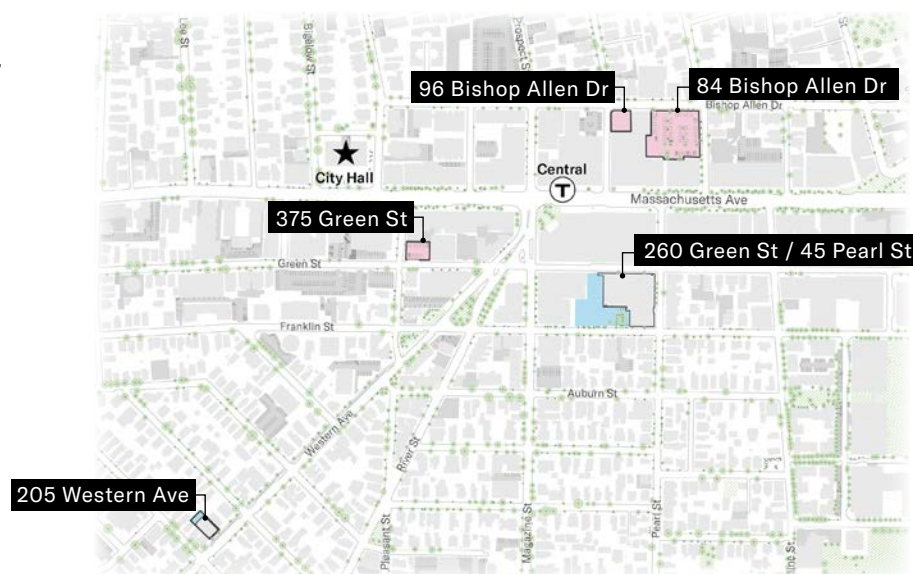
as housing

375 Green St (Lot 8)

as housing

205 Western Ave

as supportive housing



260 GREEN STREET / 45 PEARL STREET

Existing Conditions

This site holds the Central Square Branch Library and the Green Street Garage. It neighbors the Cambridge Housing Authority's Manning Apartments, a 19-story senior-living apartment building. The library is in need of more community programming space. The garage, recently renovated, serves hourly and permit parkers.

55,828

Site Area (sq ft)

C-3

Zoning District

258,686 Garage

19,824 Library

Gross Building Area
(sq ft)

4 Garage

2 Library

Number of Stories

257

Parking Spaces

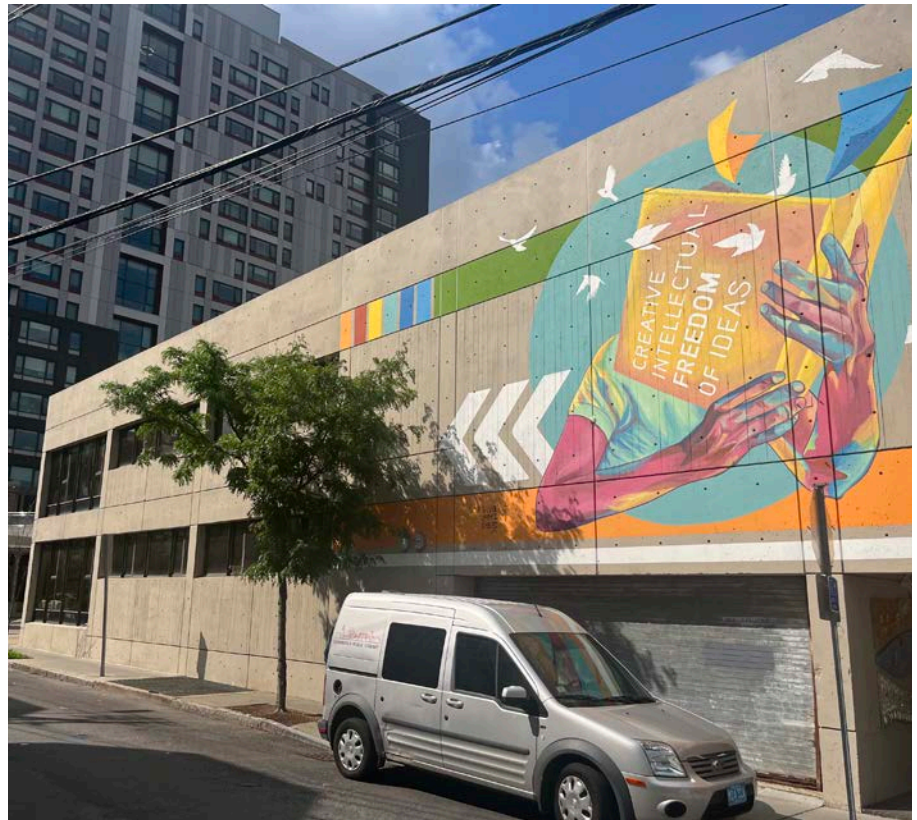
476ft/2min walk

Distance to nearest
T-Station



Site Considerations

- Structural study suggests only one-to-two additional levels may be built on top of existing garage and building.
- Recent analysis shows the garage may have additional capacity and is mostly used by monthly parkers.
- The current structure was completed in 1972 as a project that combined elderly housing (CHA Manning Apartments), a large public library branch, and the four-story parking garage.
- Library staff have expressed a desire for more library space.



260 GREEN STREET / 45 PEARL STREET

RECOMMENDATION

After moving the Central Square library branch to 689 Massachusetts Avenue, this site affords an opportunity to create a significant amount of new housing in Central Square. Future redevelopment is recommended to create a hub of housing, replace public parking, add ground floor community or active space, and create an open space connection through the block linking to Martin Luther King Jr. plaza.



Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



High-density
Affordable Housing



Cultural Amenities /
Spaces



Expanded Library



Park / Playground

“Rebuild library
with parking and
housing above, denser
use of the space.”

sample community feedback

“Would love to
see some of these lots
(maybe the library) become
affordable or market-rate
housing towers.”

“Space
for the youth! Drop
in center. Community center
for the elderly concentrating on a
Parkinson’s center.”

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



- 0.12 Acres
Open Space

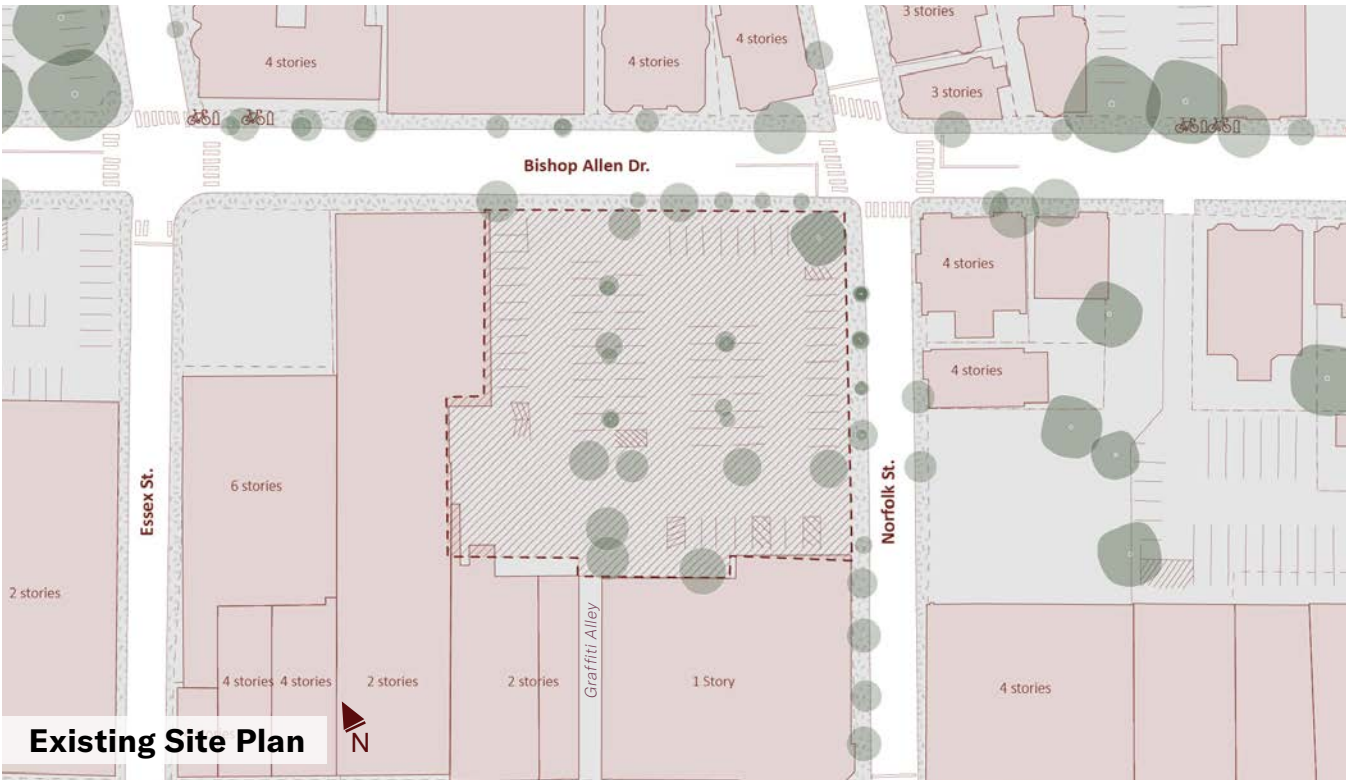


84 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE (LOT 5)

Existing Conditions

Lot 5 is the largest municipal surface parking lot and hosts the Central Square Farmer’s Markets. Prior to 2020, the lot provided 82 parking spaces to service surrounding businesses. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Starlight Square, a temporary outdoor performance space, was built to provide a safe community gathering space. The parking lot is also used to house Popportunity, an economic development initiative that provides affordable commercial space for local entrepreneurs.

33,715	N/A
Site Area (sq ft)	Number of Stories
BB	23
Zoning District	Parking Spaces
N/A	407ft/2min walk
Gross Building Area (sq ft)	Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- H-Mart and other retailers rely on nearby parking.
- Important public realm considerations include Graffiti Alley, current performance and retail incubator use as Starlight Square, the Farmer's Market, and other events.
- 84 Bishop Allen Dr has two vehicle entrances, along Bishop Allen Dr and

Norfolk St. Three pedestrian entry points exist; one along the southwest side of the site connecting the site to Massachusetts Ave via 'Graffiti Alley' and two paths along Bishop Allen Dr and Norfolk St.

- 84 Bishop Allen Dr is located in an area with low open space access.



84 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE (LOT 5)

RECOMMENDATION

As the largest City-owned surface parking lot in the study area, 84 Bishop Allen Drive offers a unique opportunity to build on current, temporary activation uses and develop a mixed-use building that provides a significant amount of housing, as well as integrate a flexible indoor/outdoor performance space, an outdoor public plaza, and retail/market space. There should be a significant focus on affordable housing and commercial space. The site should be studied for underground parking.



Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...

sample community quotes



Flexible Arts & Market Space



Small Business Incubator



Outdoor Plaza



Affordable Housing

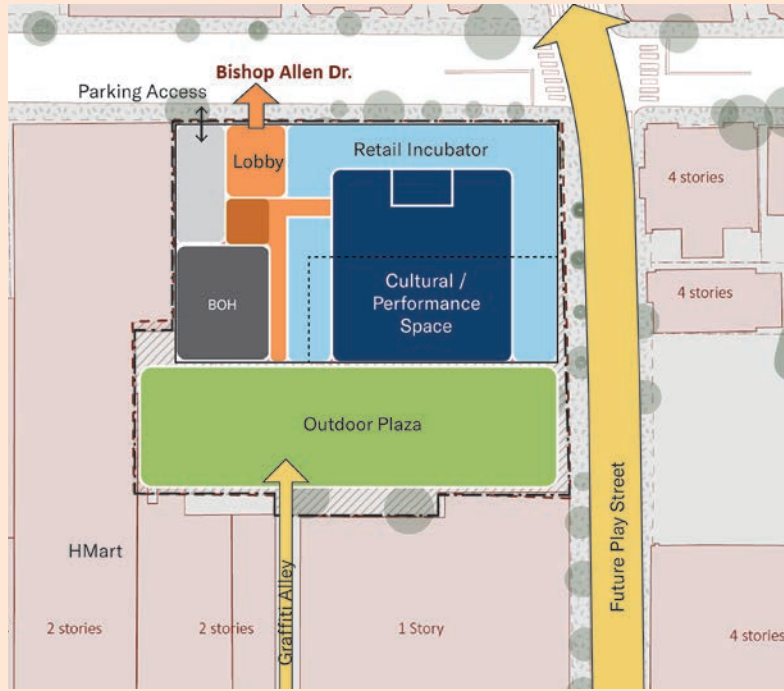
"A square in the square
(a permanent starlight with small
business incubator + open space +
cultural use) on lot 5"

"Starlight is
great and there
should be much
more here"

"Starlight
+ Popportunity
should be indoors for year
round use, with affordable
housing on top."

Test Fit Highlights

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



Ground Floor Uses



- Up to 14 stories of housing above retail, civic/cultural space and performance space
- South-facing outdoor plaza
- One level of underground parking (note: could be tested for more)



120-180
Housing Units



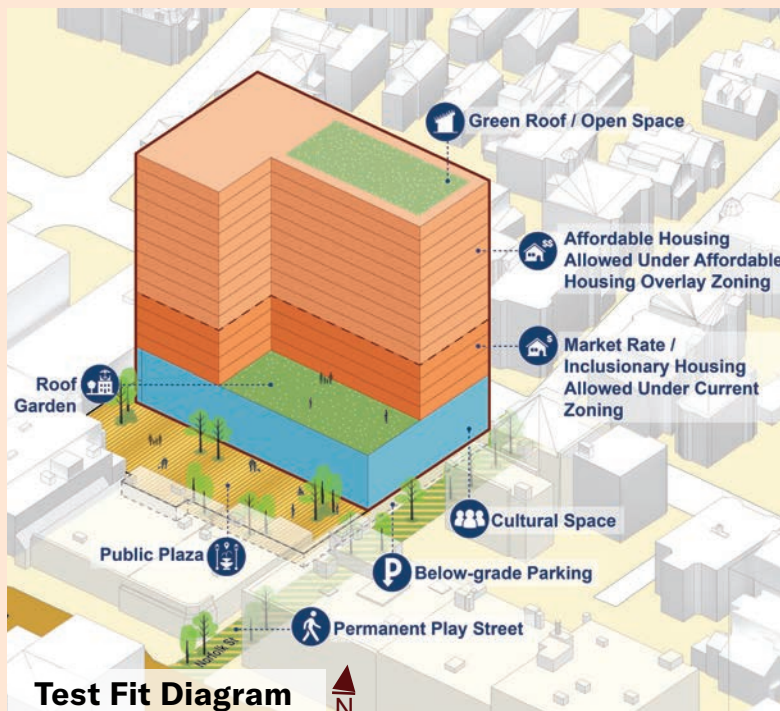
40-80 Parking
Spaces



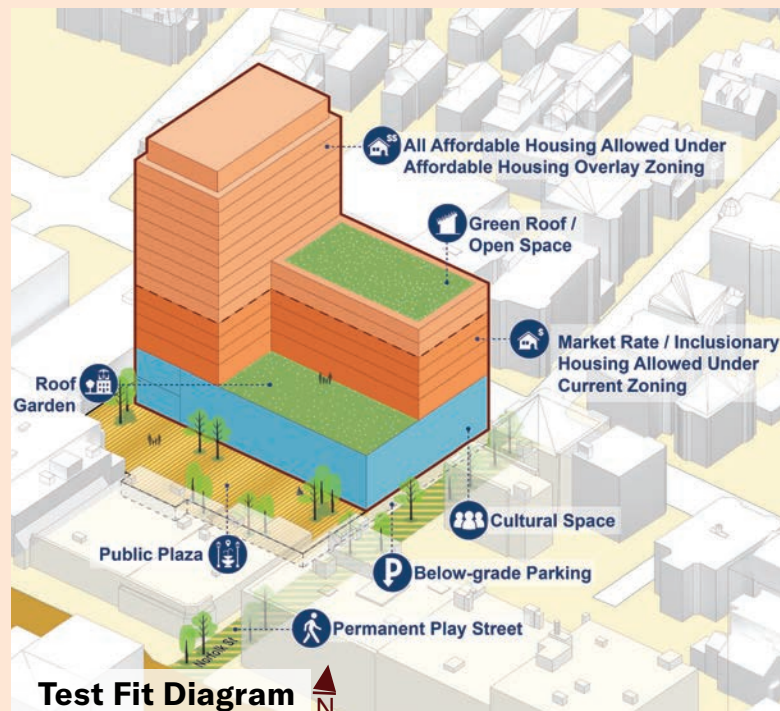
19,000 SF Flexible
Market / Cultural /
Performance Space



0.11 Acres
Open Space



Test Fit Diagram



Test Fit Diagram



96 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE (LOT 4)

Existing Conditions

This public parking lot serves the patrons of neighboring businesses, including the adjacent HMart. The lot is flanked by a wall adorned by a new mural and is across Bishop Allen Drive from a nonprofit center, recently renovated/operated by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority.

6,210	N/A
Site Area (sq ft)	Number of Stories
BB	17
Zoning District	Parking Spaces
N/A	0.1m/2min walk
Gross Building Area (sq ft)	Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- A corner property with one vehicle entrance, along Bishop Allen Dr.
- Located on the same block as 84 Bishop Allen Drive (Starlight Square) and HMart.
- Across the street from 99 Bishop Allen Drive, a newly renovated row house development with non-profit office space.
- Shade conditions at this site make the space less suited for a park or open space.



96 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE (LOT 4)

RECOMMENDATION



Together with 84 Bishop Allen Drive, 96 Bishop Allen Dr offers an opportunity to activate this block of Bishop Allen Drive and increase housing development in the area. Opportunities for ground floor active uses, such as retail or community spaces, should be explored with housing above.



Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



Affordable Housing



Small Business Incubator



Community Garden



Outdoor Plaza

"Subsidized retail for small business"

"Sports and recreation courts"

"Affordable housing"

sample community quotes

Test Fit Highlights

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



Ground Floor Uses



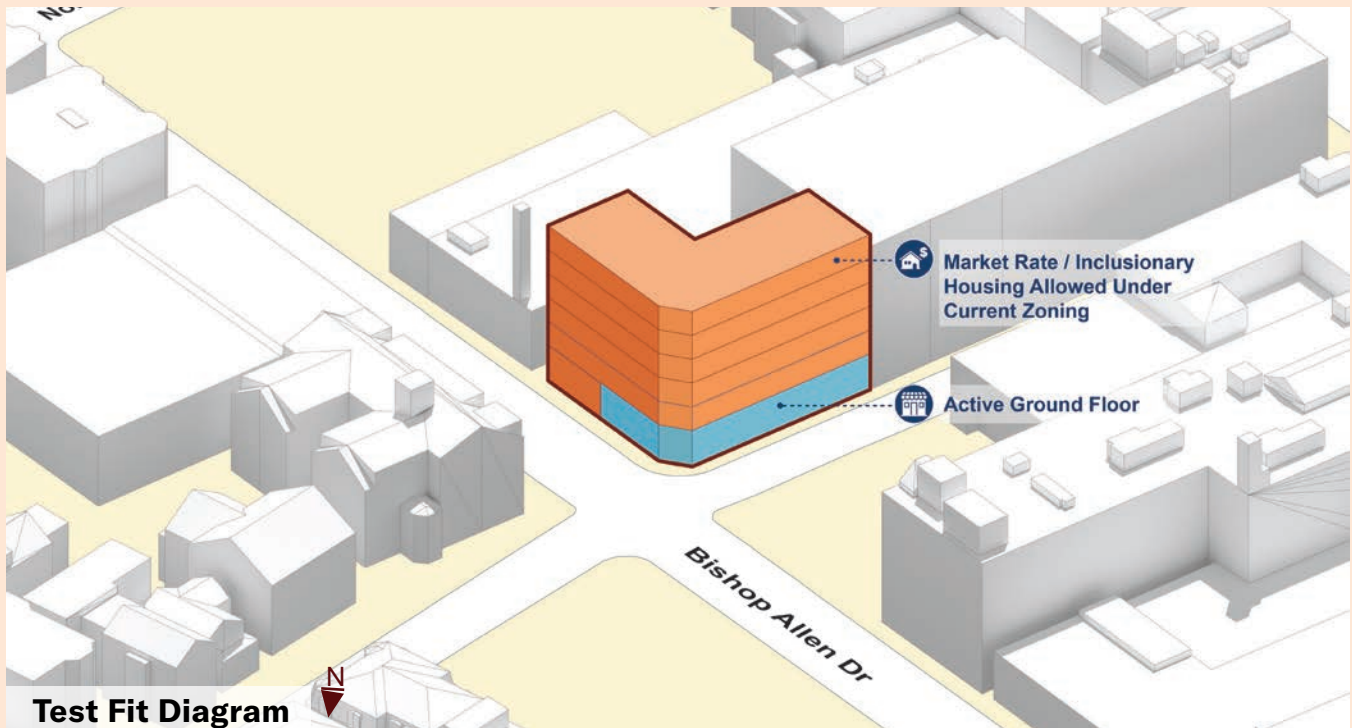
- 15-20 units, six stories
- Active community use on the ground floor
- AHO allows height up to 15 stories, but not feasible due to parcel size and construction technologies
- Loss of existing parking spaces; consider relocating lost parking spaces to other sites
- Single-loaded configuration, 3-4 units per floor



15-20 Housing Units



5,000 SF active ground floor or community use



Test Fit Diagram

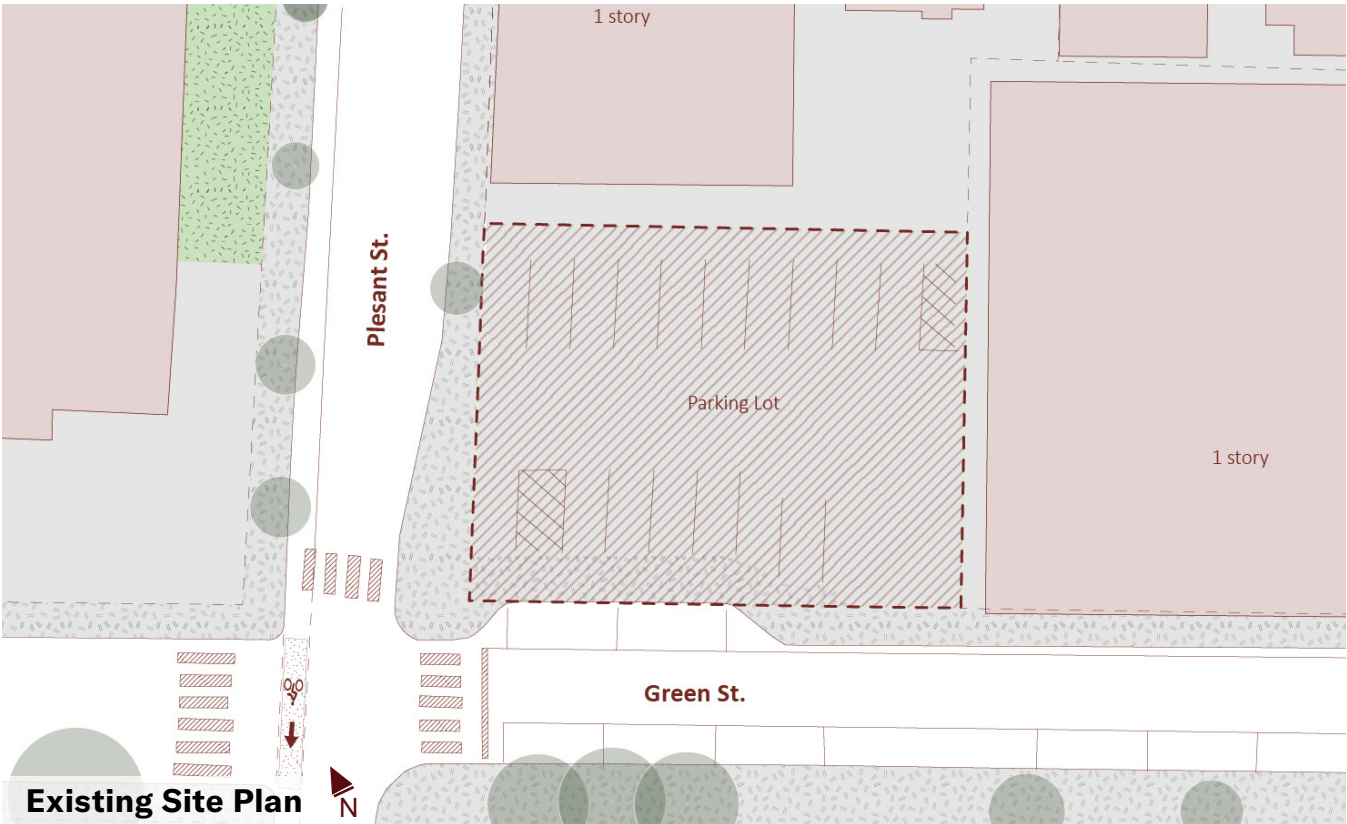


375 GREEN STREET (LOT 8)

Existing Conditions

This public parking lot with 17 parking spaces is located on the corner of Pleasant Street and Green Street and adjacent to one-story buildings to the northeast. It is across the intersection from Lot 9 (9 Pleasant St). A mural covers one wall of an adjacent single-story building.

6,436	N/A
Site Area (sq ft)	Number of Stories
BB-CSQ	17
Zoning District	Parking Spaces
N/A	0.1m/2min walk
Gross Building Area (sq ft)	Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- Next to a single-story building that fronts on Mass Ave.
- The area around 375 Green St has low-to-average access to open space.
- 375 Green St may be at increased risk of precipitation flooding in the future.
- Zoning in the BB-CSQ district allows for full development of the site (no open space requirement).
- As of right maximum height is three stories. The affordable housing overlay allows up to 15 stories.



375 GREEN STREET (LOT 8)

RECOMMENDATION



Short-term: Maintain 375 Green St as parking in the short-term.
During construction of 84 Bishop Allen Dr, this could be a location where cultural / performance spaces could be relocated.



Long-term: Explore housing opportunities, with the potential for an active ground floor use.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



Affordable Housing



Performance Space



Community Garden



Small Business Incubator

"This is a good site for housing. We should make it flat level for access and older people"

"Open space / pocket park"

"Places to pause and catch up with a friend are critical in a rapidly developing area"

sample community quotes

Test Fit Highlights

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community

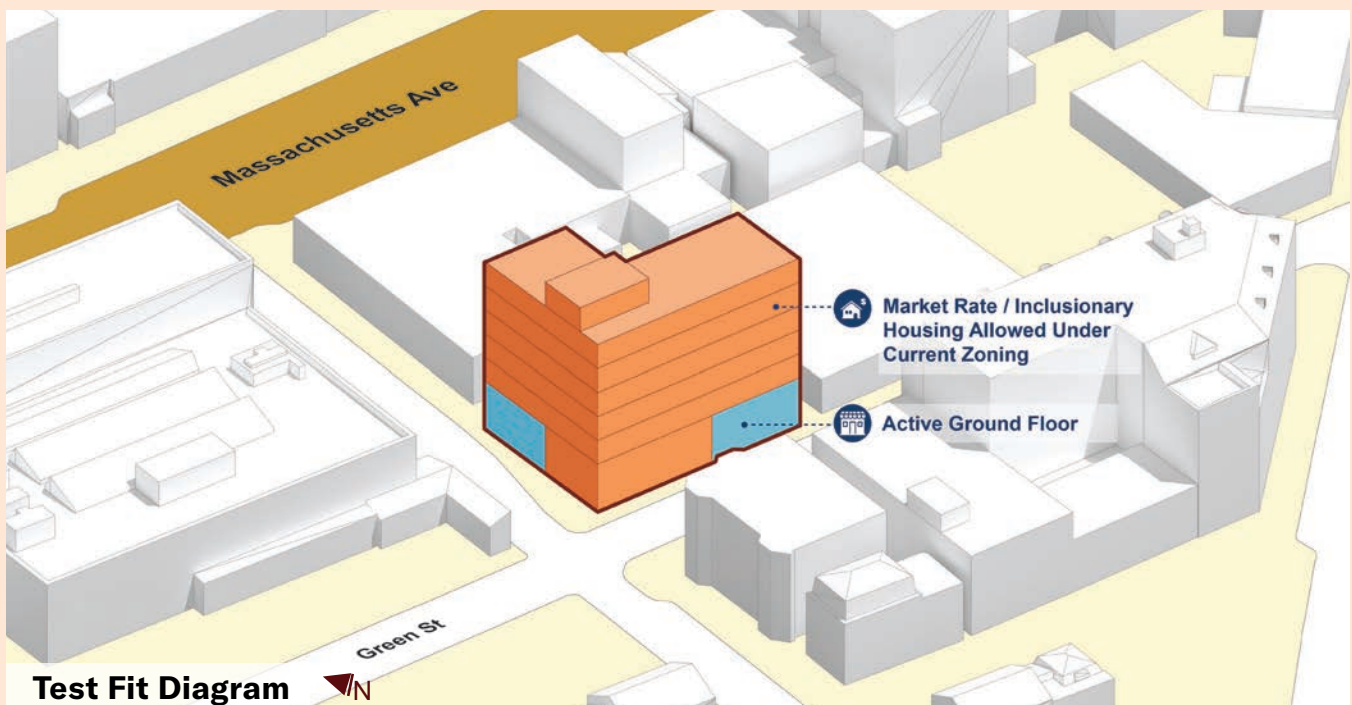


- 10-20 units of housing, six stories with retail / active use on ground floor
- AHO allows height up to 15 stories, but not feasible due to parcel size/ construction technologies
- Loss of existing parking spaces; consider relocating lost parking spaces to other sites
- Single-loaded configuration, four or five units per floor



10-20 Housing Units

Ground Floor Uses



Test Fit Diagram



205 WESTERN AVENUE

Existing Conditions

This vacant building faces the newly reconstructed Western Ave and sits in a predominantly residential neighborhood. Previously the Riverside Health Center, the building is vacant and needs substantial renovations.

5,258

Site Area (sq ft)

2

Number of Stories

BA-3

Zoning District

0

Parking Spaces

4,280

Gross Building Area
(sq ft)

0.3m/7min walk

Distance to nearest
T-Station



Site Considerations

- Building is vacant and requires extensive abatement and renovations to make building habitable.
- Does not have significant historic value.
- If demolished, the replacement building would not be as large as existing building due to current zoning requirements for the site.
- The existing building is two stories tall with a basement and a mechanical penthouse.



205 WESTERN AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION



This is a challenging site, with the building in poor condition and on a small lot with many zoning constraints. Redevelopment does not yield very many housing units, but a building renovation may be suitable for supportive housing. The City should explore the potential for housing at 205 Western Avenue, particularly supportive housing.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



Supportive Housing



Small Business Incubator



Affordable Housing



Nonprofit Offices / Social Services

"The nearby community center could use it as spillover for what they do"

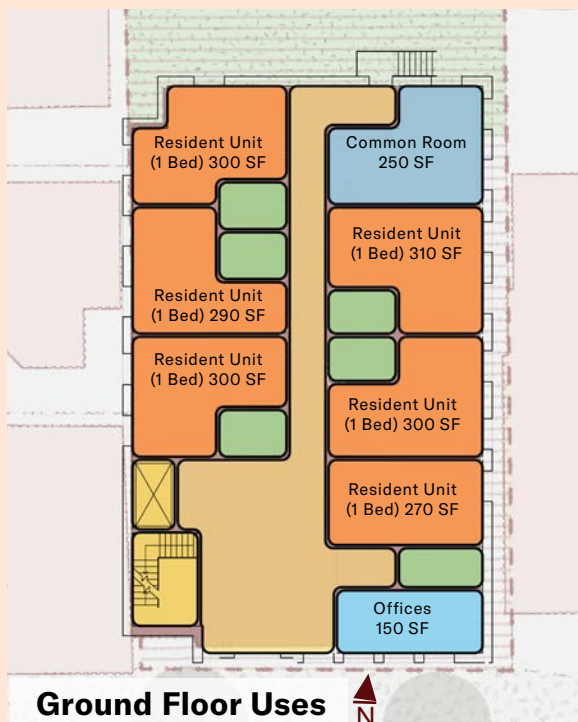
"Affordable Housing!!"

"Ask for zoning for larger building"

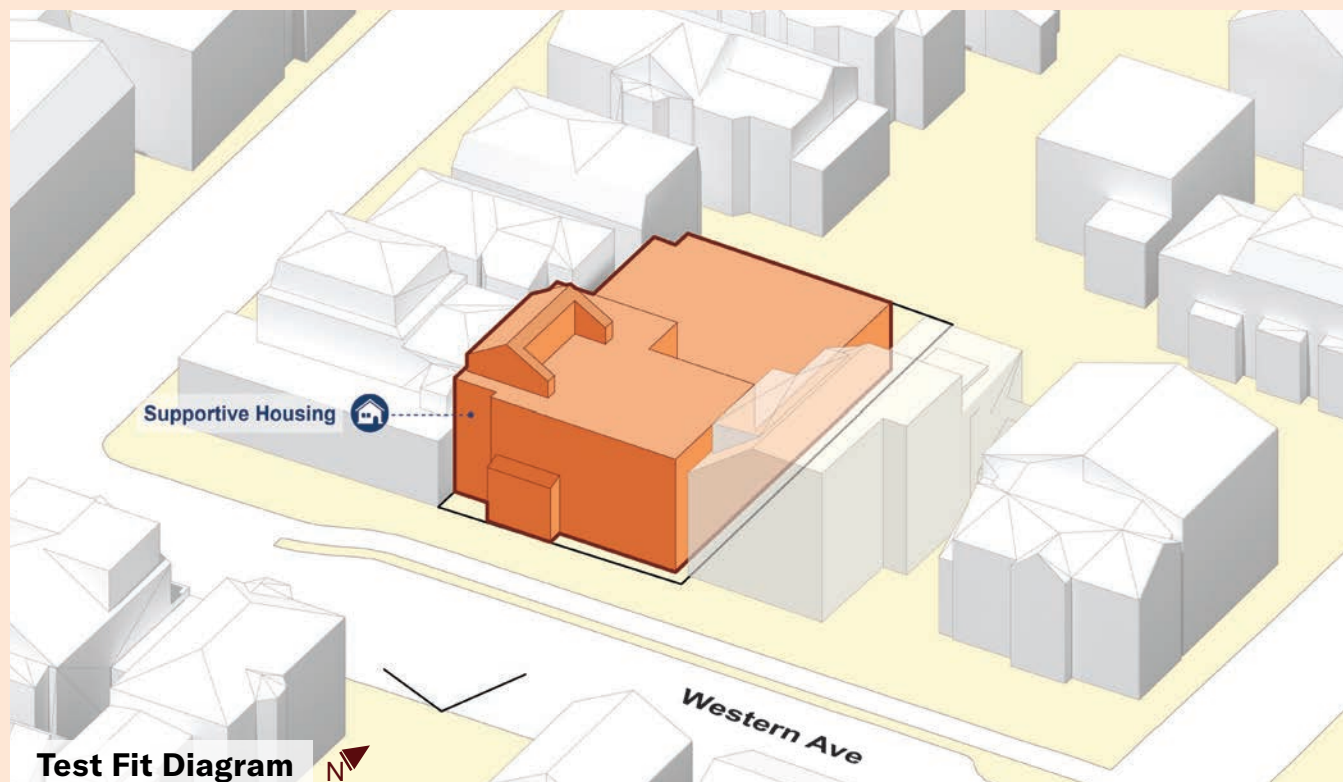
sample community quotes

Test Fit Highlights

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community



- Three stories above grade
- Six-to-ten units (270-320 SF)
- Assumes one shared common area on ground floor (250 SF)
- Offices - 350 SF
- Total Building Area (GSF) - 10,624 SF



Central Square Needs...

sample community quotes

“Parking
for cars and
bikes”

“More trees
and shade”

“Places for
children! The dream
would be an indoor play
space or a playground.”

“I think green
space is always good—maybe
more trees in any parking lots
to absorb heat and provide
shade. Art? Fountains?”

“Activating
and extending
existing alleys.”

MAINTAINING FLEXIBILITY, MEETING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS, & INCREASING OPEN SPACE IN CENTRAL SQUARE

38 Bishop Allen Dr (Lot 6)

short-term as parking

long-term as open space

9 Pleasant St (Lot 9)

short-term as parking

long-term as open space

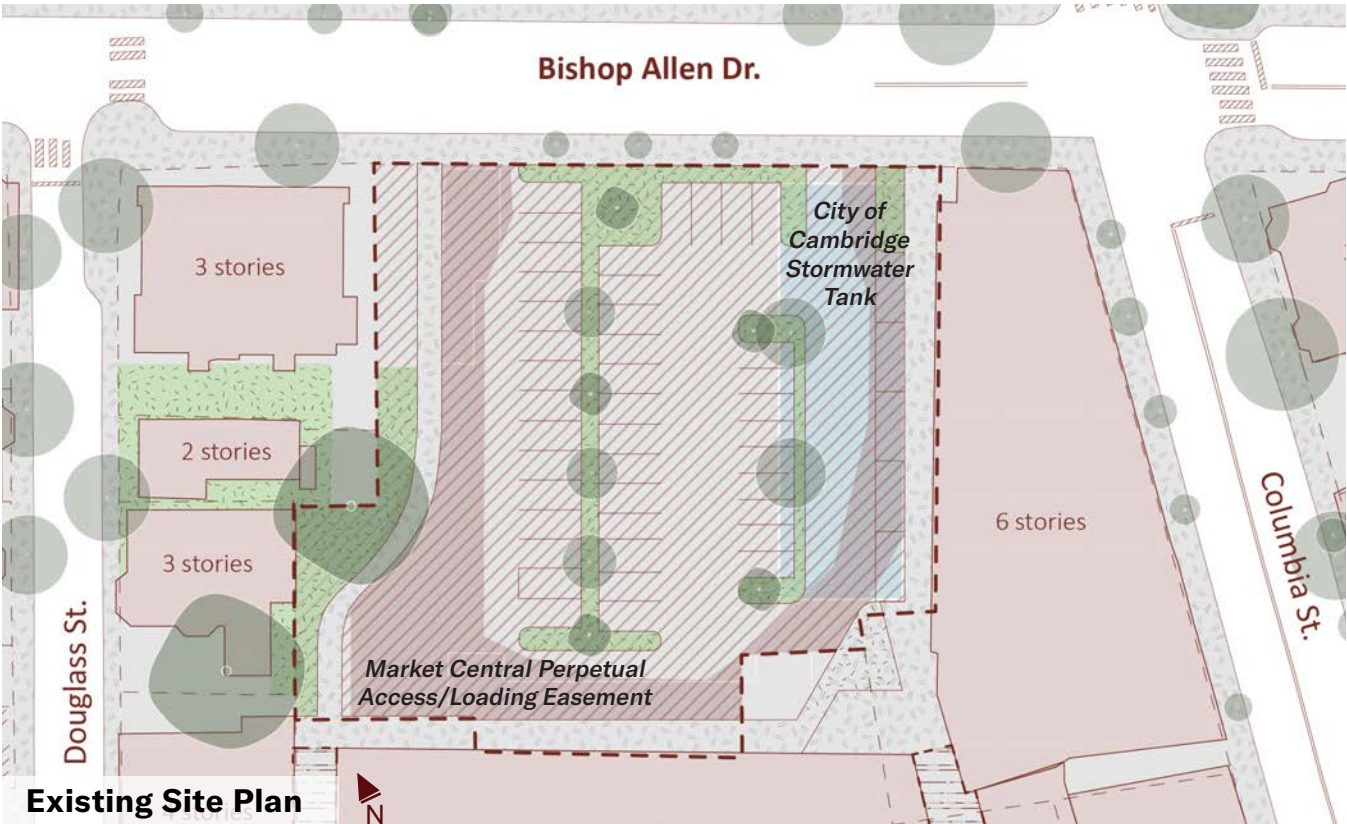


38 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE (LOT 6)

Existing Conditions

38 Bishop Allen Drive is a public parking lot with 40 parking spaces. A City stormwater tank occupies about one-third of the underground space. The current easement granted to the 19-story Market Central apartments for garage/loading access, and pending infrastructure projects by DPW, leaves the center of the lot available for additional use.

27,799	N/A
Site Area (sq ft)	Number of Stories
BB-CSQ	40
Zoning District	Parking Spaces
N/A	0.2m/4min walk
Gross Building Area (sq ft)	Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- Development is limited to certain areas of the site due to underground stormwater retention tanks and an access easement granted to Market Central for garage access and loading. As a result, only the middle section (~1/3) of the lot is buildable in the future.
- Surrounded by high-density new housing and retail.
- There are three pedestrian entry points; a paved path from Bishop Allen Drive and two passageways that connect to Massachusetts Avenue at the southwest and northeast sides of the site.
- 38 Bishop Allen Drive faces significant risk from precipitation flooding and is in an area with low open space access.



38 BISHOP ALLEN DRIVE (LOT 6)

RECOMMENDATION



Short-term: Maintain 38 Bishop Allen Drive as parking. This can help to meet parking needs as other nearby projects are under construction.



Long-term: Create a public park or open space that maintains access for easements and allows for the addition of another underground stormwater tank as needed to support stormwater management.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



High-Density
Affordable Housing



Cultural Amenities /
Spaces



Community Garden



Outdoor Plaza

“Dog park! ”

sample community quotes

“A courtyard/
playground/ open space for
children and adults to gather.”

“Mixed
use affordable
housing”

Test Fit Highlights

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community

- Open Space that maintains access for garage access easements
- Allows for addition of another underground stormwater tank
- 170' x 170' / 0.66 acres
- Lawn: 80' x 140'
- 500-1500 people in an event
- 20-30 tents + 5 trucks



0.66 Acres



stormwater tank



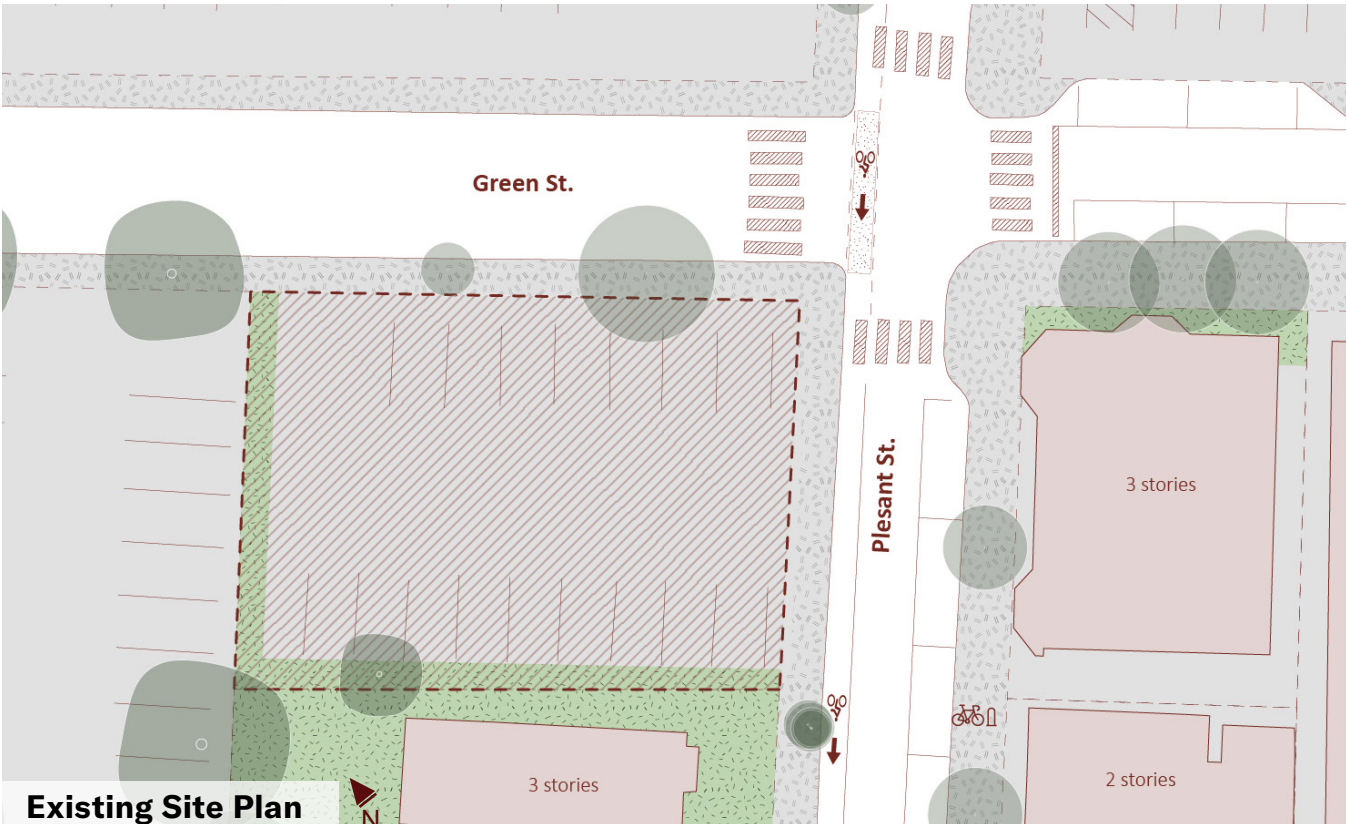
Test Fit Diagram

9 PLEASANT STREET (LOT 9)

Existing Conditions

9 Pleasant St is a public parking lot with 17 spaces, adjacent to the historic Clifton Merriman U.S. Post Office Building and across the intersection from Lot 8 (375 Green St). The neighborhood is predominantly commercial, speckled with various municipal buildings, including Cambridge City Hall, and nonprofit service providers.

7,449	N/A
Site Area (sq ft)	Number of Stories
C-2	17
Zoning District	Parking Spaces
N/A	427ft/2min walk
Gross Building Area (sq ft)	Distance to nearest T-Station



Site Considerations

- Located across from the US Post Office building and surrounded by public and private parking lots.
- Located in an area with average access to open space.
- 9 Pleasant St may be at risk of precipitation flooding in the near future (2070).
- Future buildings could be up to 85 tall, but have setback requirements and a 15% open space requirement.



9 PLEASANT STREET (LOT 9)

RECOMMENDATION



Short-term: Maintain 9 Pleasant St as parking. This can help to meet parking needs as other nearby projects are under construction. There may be opportunities to relocate some open market uses from 84 Bishop Allen Drive here during construction as needed.



Long-term: Consider for open space, possibly in tandem with opportunities for housing on adjacent lots.

Community Input Highlights

At this location, community members expressed a lot of love for...



*High-Density
Affordable Housing*



*Cultural Amenities /
Spaces*



Community Garden



Outdoor Plaza

sample community quotes

"Could this site become a square (a central gathering space)?"

"Affordable Homeownership"

"Parking here is very full"

Test Fit Highlights

Note: These are sample possible program options but will be refined with the community

- A pocket park (0.14 acres), possibly in tandem with opportunities for housing on adjacent lots
- 500-1500 people in an event
- 20-30 tents + 5 trucks



0.1 Acres



Program Summary

Housing

250-450 units

City & Community Resources

67,000 SF community spaces

15,000 city offices

Open Space & Supporting Infrastructure

1 acre

Parking

200-300 spaces

260 Green St



90-200 housing units



16,000 SF community space

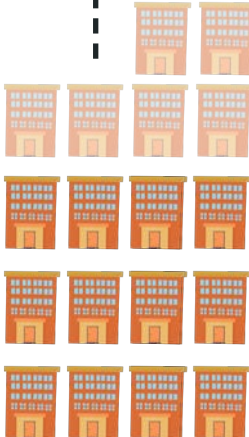


0.12 acres



150-200 parking spaces

84 Bishop Allen Dr



120-180 housing units



19,000 SF flexible market / cultural / performance space

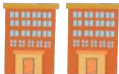


0.11 acres



40-80 parking spaces

375 Green St



10-20 housing units

96 Bishop Allen Dr



15-20 housing units



5,000 SF active ground floor or community use

(totals are approximate counts)

205 Western Ave

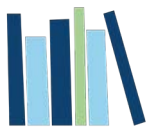


6-10 units
supportive housing

689 Mass Ave



6,000 SF
offices



15,000 SF
library

3 Bigelow St



8,500 SF
offices

105 Windsor St



11,500 SF
community space

38 Bishop Allen Dr



0.66 acres



stormwater tank

9 Pleasant St



0.1 acres



1 icon represents 10 housing units



1 icon represents 10 parking spaces

03

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

EARLY ACTION ITEMS

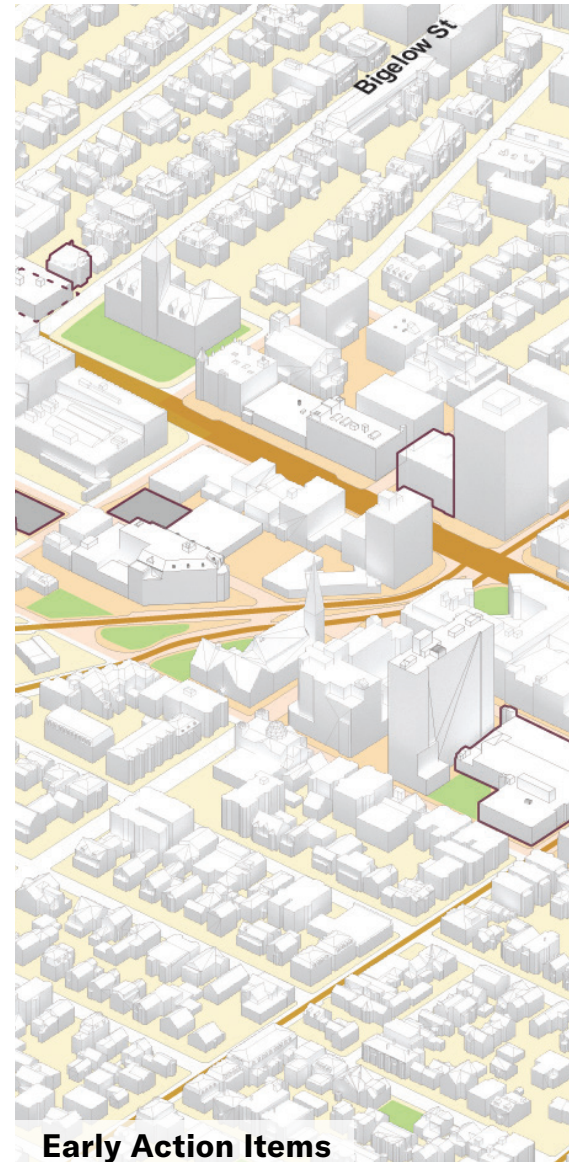
The recommendations suggested in this study are possible avenues that these ten sites could follow that reflect community feedback; are permissible by current regulations; and are likely to be feasible based on an initial understanding of site and building opportunities and constraints. Additional factors such as market context, funding, logistics, and parking needs mean that changes across all of these sites can not and should not all happen at once. At the same time, the findings from this study have helped to set priorities for which projects to move forward in the near-term. In particular, a few key projects are set up well to be early action items that move multiple community goals forward. These include:

105 Windsor St

- This project can move forward with next steps to include a community process to determine the neighborhood's specific priorities and desires for community uses. Capital funding has been identified for the future renovation.

84 Bishop Allen Dr & 96 Bishop Allen Dr

- The City recommends an open process to seek proposals from interested parties to create a mixed-use development that will bring a mix of housing, with an emphasis on affordability, civic and cultural space, and public parking. The development objectives will be deeply informed by ongoing community feedback and aligned with the community vision described during this study.





LONG-TERM VISION

Other projects are better-suited to longer-term implementation. This allows for exploration of the potential to leverage adjacent sites, take advantage of changing construction trends and parking needs, and build on moves that were made as part of short-term steps. Key steps as part of a long-term vision for these sites include:

- Create a high-quality Central Square library at 689 Massachusetts Avenue.
- Once library is relocated, redevelop 260 Green St as housing (including affordable) and parking. Redevelop 375 Green St as housing.
- Expand City offices at 3 Bigelow St, considering opportunities to facilitate redevelopment with the Lombardi building.
- Determine feasibility of supportive housing at 205 Western Ave or elsewhere.
- Leverage 38 Bishop Allen Dr and 9 Pleasant St and all lots to support city infrastructure needs (parks, open space, stormwater retention).



Overall Parking Considerations

As projects are implemented, parking needs and transportation demand management opportunities should be studied to understand how much parking should be replaced or provided on each site. A preliminary objective is to replace as much public parking as possible when sites redevelop. Parking counts in this study serve as a baseline but should be restudied as part of each site's detailed implementation.



An aerial map of Central Square, Boston, showing building footprints in grey and streets in yellow. Several locations are highlighted with colored squares and callout boxes: 205 Western Ave (orange), 3 Bigelow St (blue), 689 Mass. Ave (blue), 9 Pleasant St (green), and 375 Green St (orange). A dashed orange line outlines a larger area in the center. An inset map in the top left corner provides a closer view of the 205 Western Ave location.

205 Western Ave

Western Ave

3 Bigelow St

689 Mass. Ave

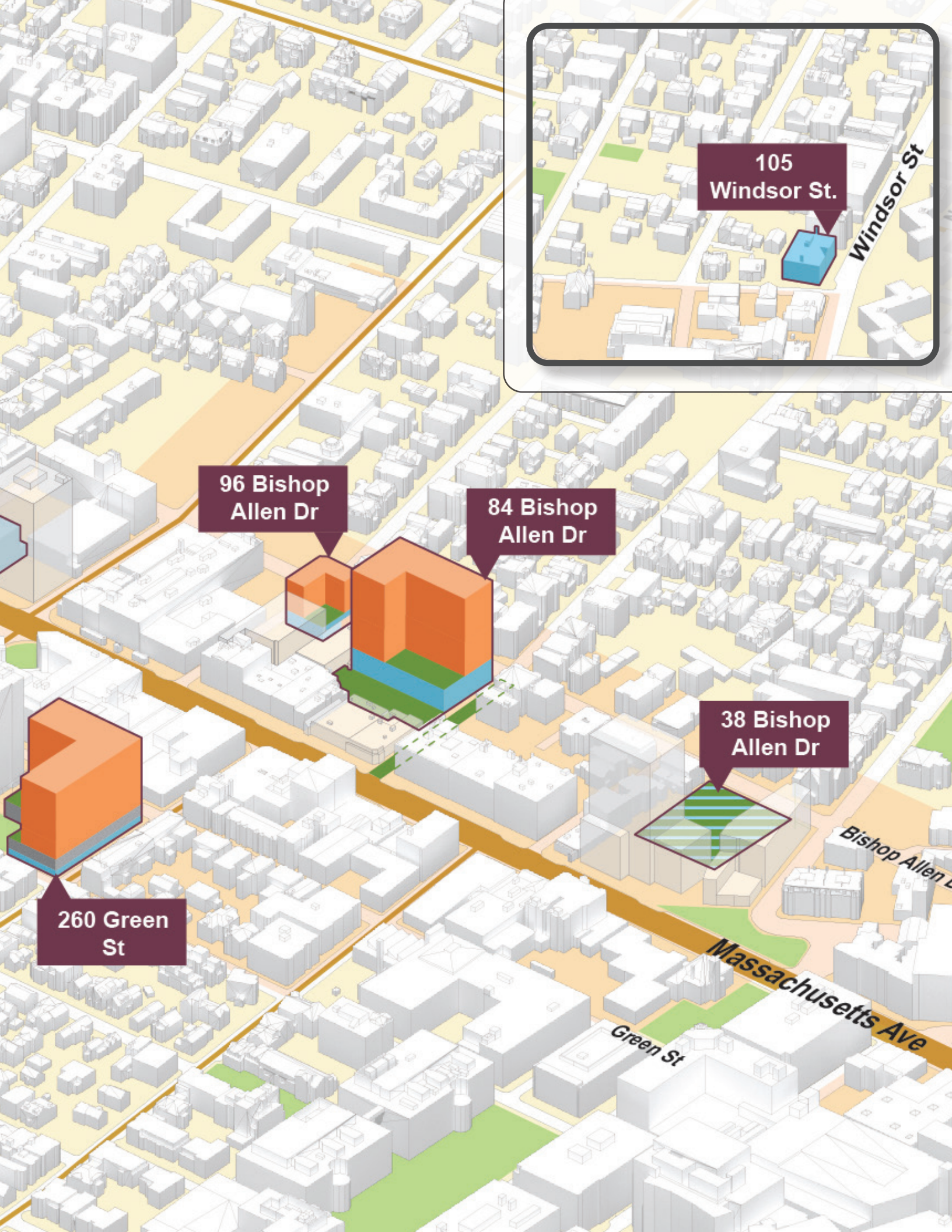
9 Pleasant St

375 Green St

CONCLUSION

This study presents recommendations for the use of ten municipally-owned parking lots and buildings in Central Square to best use its own assets to realize community goals and support City operations.

The City is committed to implementing these recommendations, starting with early action items, and continuing to evaluate and maintain flexibility as opportunities become available and needs evolve.



105
Windsor St.

Windsor St

96 Bishop
Allen Dr

84 Bishop
Allen Dr

38 Bishop
Allen Dr

260 Green
St

Bishop Allen Dr

Massachusetts Ave

Green St

